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What we're playing: TOCA Tourers, Falcon 4.0 beta, Quake 2,
 Mysteries of Sith, Acrophobia, Tex Murphy: Overseer,
 FIFA 98, CM 2, Ultima Online, FFVII

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Editorial



We make this magazine because we love being around games, we make it so we can share our inside knowledge and experience with you, but most of all, we make it because every time a new issue comes out we get the regulation ton of kind'n'friendly mail from you lot. Naturally, we get mails pointing out errors and many suggesting new things they'd like to see in PC PowerPlay - but these are uniformly kind and friendly too. I've been in the publishing scene for quite a while, and here at Next Publishing I see the sort of letters other mags get. The PC PowerPlay mail is the best I've ever seen. Intelligent and incisive and often richly smarmy and pointless -

which we also like. Thanks.

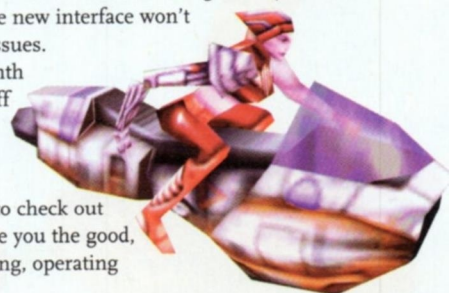
Idsoftware's Paul Steed also likes us, which is kinda flattering. In a recent .plan update (sort of a regular email to the world from the id guys), Paul said: "Yesterday I got my monthly collection of ads for the plethora of games out or soon to be out. Some call this a magazine but lately I have been so disenchanted and down right disappointed in the visual layout, editing and content of most American gaming mags that for the most part I view them as an opportunity to see all the new ads. Right now I'd much rather pick up PC PowerPlay (Australian) or PC Gamer UK than nearly any other mag (except Game Developer who's nicely specific to what us developers do for a living)." It's just another kind reader's comment from someone who, in the grand scheme of things, is no more or less important than you, but I'd be lying if I said we didn't run around doing happy high 5's when we first saw it.

Enough with blowing our own horn, we're not perfect and we most certainly know it. As you may have noticed there were a few mistakes in PCPP 22 (March). Some screwed-up screen-shots, some out of place text and some slightly embarrassing captions. An analogy for how it all happened is the recent Auckland powergrid failure - everything that could go wrong did; we're talking a hard drive crash of the worst possible kind at the worst possible time coupled DAT backup failure which resulted in Malcolm the Art Director having to re-do about three-quarters of the mag in three days. Exciting publishing/deadline stuff, but not so helpful in our quest to be as perfect as possible. We hope you think it's funny, for the sake of our sanity we're trying to look at it that way too... Won't happen again Reader!

Making up for it [Editor puts on best pleading, please believe me look], is the sexy new Interface for the PCPP CD. It was developed completely in-house by Tech Ed Jere Lawrence. And this is only version 1. The new software allows us to easily add new features and generally make it as fabulous as we like, so while the look and feel of the new interface won't change, look for funky new bits over the next few issues.

Enjoy this issue, we think it's a good one. Next month is our second birthday and we've got some cool stuff planned to celebrate - like the best competitions and prizes you've ever seen! You'll be blown away, guaranteed. In a couple of hours I'm jetting off to Seattle to spend a week with Microsoft, so be sure to check out my full report next month - you can trust me to give you the good, the bad and the ugly on the Big M's plans for gaming, operating systems and global domination.

Ben



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Get the most out of the ALL NEW PowerPlay CD. Game tips, control summary, technical support and more.

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All the cool Flight Sims grounded! Makin' Movies from games, busy Intel unveils its hot new 3D chip, makes friends with Cyrix and ends production of the Pentium plus tons more!

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Adventure games are back! From being the dominant genre a few years ago to obscurity and back again. We examine the history and future of Adventure Gaming.

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All the fun you'll be having later, though you'll wish it was now...

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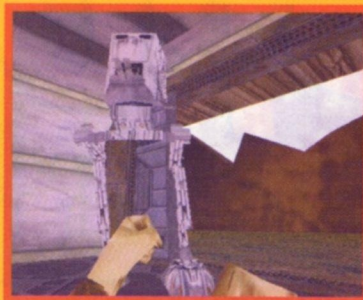
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Like anally retentive pseudo-spreadsheet strategy games. Got a few dozen hours to kill? You need Detroit from Impressions!



CD GUIDE - 16 Demos

The **NEW** **IMPROVED** PC PowerPlay CD Menu!

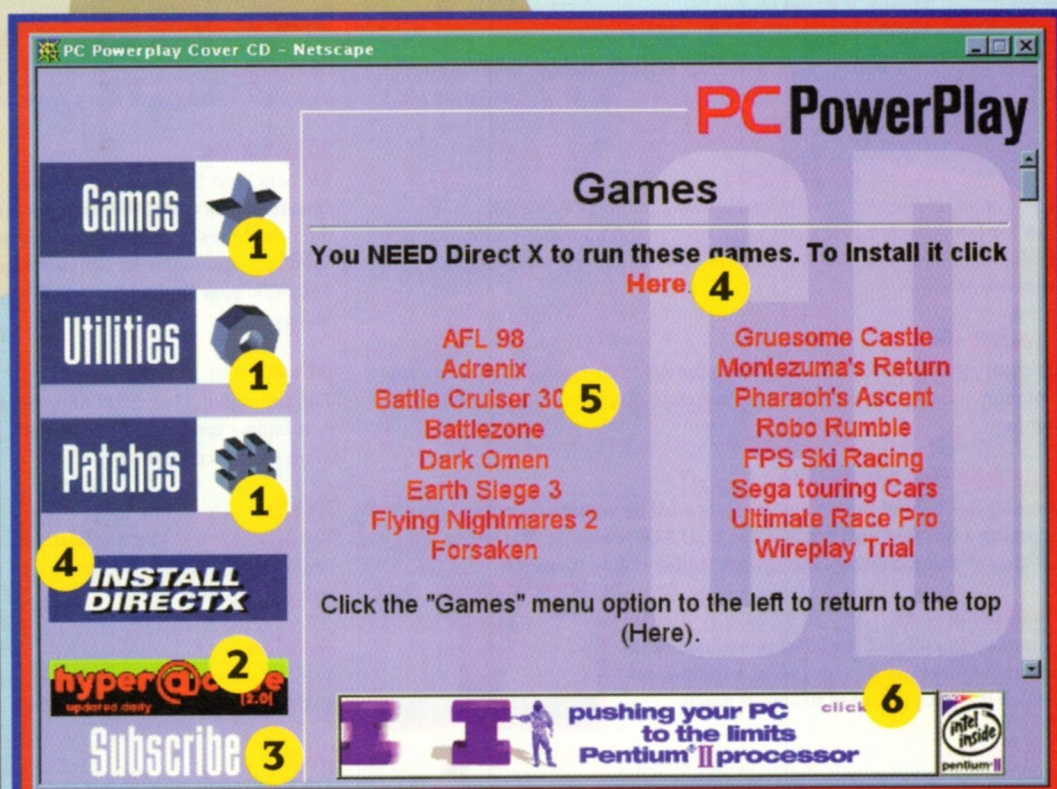
Greetings all and welcome to this the first of our brand new Cover CD's with the NEW MENU!!!. The menu had long been a sore point with many of the readers, and to a fair extent ourselves as well. The majority of you complained that it looked bad and seemed very dated when compared to other cover CD's.

We agreed with your comments, and from our point of view, faced the difficulty of inflexibility. Thus we took control of the menu in house and Jere Lawrence kindly (or foolishly depending upon your perspective) took it upon himself to develop a new system. Now as this is our first big release with the new menu, we may have some teething problems. Here in both the PowerPlay labs and in the hallowed PowerPlay offices we've gone off the QC deep end to ensure that the new system works, and works well. To which we can say we're quite satisfied. However, if you have any problems, if possible, take a screenshot of the error and send it to cdtech@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

If you REALLY liked the old menu...

Now, in case the new menu gives your system indigestion, you can still launch the old menu by following these simple instructions.

- Right click on your CDROM icon.
 - Click on "Start old Menu"
- We plan on leaving the old menu on the next few cover CD's until we can gather enough feedback on the new menu. We'd also really appreci-



Getting Started

1 Click here to open up the goodies in each category.

2 Click this to go to the best online games site in the known universe - Hyper@ctive!

3 Many incredibly convenient ways to subscribe are to be found here. Win truly amazing prizes!

4 90% of the tech support calls we get are to due outdated or improperly installed DirectX drivers. DirectX is a Microsoft product that lets games work with Win 95. You need it!

5 The meat of the CD. The goodies for whatever category you choose (Games, Utilities, Patches) will appear here.

6 Visit the sponsors www site, learn something new and useful and help Next Publishing make enough money to keep us in the lifestyle we've become accustomed to.

ate your comments on the overall look and feel of the new menu. Now that we're using Netscape and Java to present the interface we can make any modification we feel necessary. Now, we have the power.

How the new menu works

We've tried to keep everything on the new menu as simple as possible. On the left hand side of the menu, you will notice a Menu bar with a number of different options. Clicking on this

bar will bring up the titles for either "Games, Utilities or Patches".

Clicking Install Direct X will Install Direct X and clicking Subscribe will present you with a number of options that allow you



to subscribe to PC PowerPlay. Clicking the big Games button will place you at the top of the Games list and allow you to choose the games you're interested in. This will actually jump you to a point within the entire document and you can still navigate backwards and forwards using the scroll bar.

To return back to the top and select another title, just click the "Games" button again. The same process applies for utilities as well.

A word on Pex (Pex = PowerPlay Executable)

If you've already run the Cover CD, you may have noticed that we're using Netscape to display the new menu. This was decided upon because it gives us all the flexibility we'd ever need. Now we can make additions as the ever changing world of gaming journalism requires.

Netscape, because of security restrictions, cannot execute any programs off the local hard drive. If it could, then idiots on the net could write

Java/Netscape code to do potentially unpleasant things to your machine.

Ease of use is a must for any kind of Cover CD. So, I (Jere Lawrence) have written a program that interfaces with Netscape allowing you to execute applications from a click. When you click on a link, a dialogue box will come up asking you whether you wish to open the

link, or save it to disk.

We're confident that can just choose to "Open it" (you must do that to execute the program) and check the checkbox that asks if you want to be asked this question again and leave it at that. (Doing this will cause Netscape to never query execution of a Pex file again)

We've tested Pex thoroughly and have not been able to execute a program off a local hard drive from a remote location off the Internet or internal network (Intranet). However the decision is wholly up to you. If you use Netscape as your preferred browser, and are particularly security conscious, then you would want to uncheck the checkbox that asks you to confirm execution of a local file. Ultimately the decision is totally yours and we have deliberately left that security check in place for those with systems that need to scrutinize everything (such as a work computer), and hope that you appreciate our concern for your security.

Troubleshooting

If you see the error:

"Netscape is unable to find the file or directory named:

/pcppmenu/html/index.html"

This means that you already have a Netscape Communicator session open. Close all Netscape windows (including mail) and double click your CD icon to start the menu.



THE GAMES

Battlezone Demo

Activision

Action Strategy

\bzone

Battlezone by Activision is both a remake of the original Atari classic Battlezone and also a revolution in itself. With resource management and brilliant secondary unit control it's an absorbing experience.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports Direct 3D.

Q = Slow Forward

W = Forward

A = Strafe Left

S = Stop and Back

D = Strafe Right

F & mouse down = Pitch Up

C & mouse up = Pitch Down

Mouse left = Turn left

Mouse Right = Turn Right

E = Jump

left mouse button = Fire Weapon

Right mouse button = Select Weapon

F8 through F12 = Select Hard Point

Ctrl & F8 through Ctrl & F12 = Link Similar Hard Points

Shift-F1 = Cockpit View

Shift-F2 = HUD only view

Shift-F3 = Over Vehicle View

Shift-F4 = External Camera view

Esc = Game Options Menu

1 through 9 and 0 = Activate Command Interface Menus

Ctrl & Select Unit = Multiple Select Units

Space Bar = Issue Smart Reticule Command to Selected Unit

Alt = Select target

Tab = Cancel Selected Command Menu

Shift = Mouse Control of Menu

Ctrl & F1 through Ctrl & F7

Map = Selected Units to Quick Key

F1-F7 = Select Player Mapped Quick Key Group
T = Target Enemy On/Off
T = Turn off Nav Beacon
N = Select Next Nav Beacon
I = Get information on object under reticule
H = Hop Out of Vehicle
Ctrl-B = Bail Out of Vehicle
K = Deploy/Undeploy deployable vehicles
Ctrl-C = Chat to another player in Multiplayer.
Pause = Pause game
Alt-x = Exit mission

Battle Cruiser 3000

3000AD
 Dos Sci Fi Simulation
 \bc3k

Let the controversy be laid to rest. BC3K in all its glory is here in it's FULL entirety. That's to say, the full game patched to D7. Looks great too. Thanks Derek! Once installed run bc3k.bat from the Installed directory to play Battle Cruiser 3000
System requirements: Pentium 166, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports a Joystick

Wireplay Trial

Telstra
 Online Gaming

Wireplay is a new and fast multiplayer gaming system that you can now try for yourself.
System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard, 28.8 Modem.

Adrenix Demo

Playmates Interactive
 Sci Fi Action

\games\win95\adrenix
 Descent meets Duke 3D. Sounds like an unusual combination, but Adrenix offer 6 degrees of freedom within a cityscape combines action with puzzle solving. Set in a world where plagues, pollution, and nuclear disasters have destroyed the structure of today's society. Military law reigns supreme, and with the assistance of Medtech, a massive research conglomerate, the military leaders have developed an experimental drug called Adrenix, which increases a soldier's strength, endurance, and resistance to pain. Unfortunately, there is one minor side effect; death.

Your role is to free your fiancée Maria from Medtech, and crush their mad plans for mankind.
System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports Direct 3D



AFL 98 Demo

EA Sports
 Sports

\games\win95\afldemo
 Put on those *super* tight shorts and bound around to what is more commonly referred to as Aerial Ping Pong. I'll admit it, I'm a Rugby man through and through, but AFL the computer game is addictive enough to offer consideration to the "other" code.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports a Joystick/Gamepad

Arrow Keys = Direction

Button 2 = Jump and catch Ball
Button 4 = Jump and Hit-Out

In Possession of the Ball

Button 1 (with direction) = Kick
 Press quickly for pass or kick for

goal. Hold and release for a longer kick to space. Shaded arrow indicates directions to pass in. Darker shaded arrow indicates goal is in range.

Button 2 (with direction) = Handball/Disposal = Short shaded arrow indicates direction to pass in.

Button 3 (with direction) = Speed Burst/Evasion (1+2 on 2 Button Joystick)

Button 4 = Bounce

Defending (Other Player in Possession)

Button 1 = Select Player

Button 2 = Tackle

Button 3 = Speed Burst - in open (1+2 on 2 Button Joystick) = Jostle/Bump - when contesting ball

Loose Ball (Not in Possession by a Player)

Button 1 = Select Player

Button 2 = Jump - on field mark-

ing to take a Mark. Kick Ball on the Ground. If you continue to move after a mark you will be considered to have "played on"
Button 3 = Speed Burst (1+2 on 2 Button Joystick) and Jostle Player/Bumping - when contesting ball

Button 4 = Jump and Spoil/Knock Ball Away

Free Kicks and Marks

D-Pad = Move Target Marker around the field

Button 1 First Press = Start the power bar moving upwards

Second Press = Set the power of your kick (there is a mark on the power bar which corresponds to the position of your marker)
 Third Press = Set the accuracy of your kick by stopping the descending marker at the centre of the 'Accuracy Meter'.

Button 2 = Move the Target Marker to one of your team mates

Virtual Stadium Cameras

F1-F9 - Select Camera

Game Speed

Ctrl + F9-F12 - F9 = Slowest Speed, F12 = Fastest

Warhammer: Dark Omen Demo

Electronic Arts

Real Time strategy

\games\win95\darkins

Dark Omen is an exciting new Real Time Strategy game that pits us (The Humans) against a marauding army of undead. Graphically Dark Omen is

amazing and allows for real-time 3D battles based on the Warhammer, Battle system.

Battles are beautifully depicted in a true real-time 3D environment with freedom to move, rotate and zoom the viewpoint as desired. You can command regiments of cavalry, infantry and archers as well as wizards, war machines and huge monsters in your role as a mercenary army captain.

System requirements:

Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

This game supports Direct 3D

This game is controlled with the mouse

Earth Siege 3 Alpha

Dynamix

Sci Fi Action

`\games\win95\es3alpha`

Earthsiege 3 heralds a dramatic new chapter in the ever-expanding Earthsiege Universe where you can choose to battle across the solar system as a Terran operative, Martian rebel, or Cybrid death machine. There's not a whole lot to do in this alpha, but it's exciting to see what Dynamix have been up to.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

This game supports Direct 3D

This game supports a Joystick / Gamepad

Flying Nightmares 2 rolling demo

Eidos

Simulation

Although flying Nightmares 2 has been severely delayed, this rolling demo offers a glimmer of how the finished product should run.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

This game supports Direct 3D

Forsaken Demo

Acclaim

3D Action

`\games\win95\forsaken`

Forsaken is THE Descent beater. Stunning graphics and top quality playability make this an awesome title. The Earth torn from its orbital axis and the fragmented husk is now lifeless, devoid of atmosphere and bathed in the searing radiation of the sun. Within a few agonizing days, all human life had perished. News of its extinction



Earth Siege 3

spread quickly through the universe, reaching the High Senators of the Imperial Theocracy, the ruling body of the multi-verse.

Months later, the solar system was declared "Condemned" and now every bounty hunter, mercenary, space pirate, and free-booting scum of the earth in the galaxy has the unwritten right to raid the system and take anything that the Theocracy didn't want. The worst cut-throats known have converged on astride their roaring anti-gravity pioncycles.

It's a totally corny story, but ya gotta love it just for the quote "astride their roaring anti-gravity pioncycles." *hahahaha*

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

This game supports Direct 3D.

This game supports a Joystick / Gamepad

A = Forward

Z = Reverse

Left/Right = Rotate left/right

Up/Down = Rotate up/down

ALT = Slide (strafe) mode

CTRL = Fire primary

SPACE = Fire secondary

Q = Bank Left

E = Bank Right

B = Mines

S = Nitro (not available in demo)

Home/End = Cycle weapons

ESC = Pause game (access menu)

F1 = Quick key to keyboard config

F4 = Remove screen text



Flying Nightmares



Forsaken

F6 = Rear View Window

-/+ = Change screen size

Numpad 4/6 = Rotate left/right

Numpad 8/2 = Rotate down/up

Numpad 7/9 = Roll left/right

Numpad -/+ = Slide up/down

Numpad 1/3 = Slide left/right

Multiplayer Game

F9 - F11 Send taunt message

Shift + F9 - F11 Enter your own message

Gruesome Castle 3Dfx demo

Gee Whiz

Adventure

`\games\win95\gc_demo`

Gruesome Castle is an absolutely amazing example of a 3D accelerated adventure. It both looks and plays beautifully. Combining the 3D freedom of Nintendo's Mario 64 with the classic adventure game play of LucasArt's Monkey Island series. This is the first true 3D graphic adventure for the PC.

Gruesome Castle follows the exploits of Jake and Anna King and their pals Skip, Wendy, Brad and Jeepers the dino-monkey. Together they form the Gee Whiz! Mystery Club - an adventurous gang of teens who travel the world solving mysteries. 3Dfx only.



Gruesome Castle

What's Gruesome Castle all about?
What can I do in this demo?
Do you think the castle is really haunted?
See you.

System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports the 3Dfx. This game supports the Microsoft Gamepad
cursor keys = move Jake around
left shift key = hold to run
CTRL = hold for look around mode
Z = look at an object / binocular zoom
X = use an object / binocular zoom
C = open/close inventory ring
TAB = open/close inventory ring
SPACE = skip through text
A = change camera modes
s = move camera in/out for camera modes 2) and 3)
q = quit the game

Montezuma's Return Demo

Utopia
3D Platform Adventure
\\games\\win95\\mrdemo
Those oldies like me will remember the immensely playable and fun Montezuma for the 8 bit systems. The return features all the exciting playability of the original plus in 3D a completely new perspective. Send in the rolling skulls.
System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports the 3Dfx.

Pharaoh's Ascent Demo

Ambertech
2D Platform Adventure
\\games\\win95\\phdemo
Essentially a modern day Lode Runner meets Boulder Dash. As the recently deceased pharaoh you must escape your pyramid tomb. As pharaoh you are able to push large boulders by hand or nudge them from afar with the Staff of Ra, a gift from the "cheerleader goddess" Isis.
System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

Robo Rumble Demo

Metropolis
3D Real Time Strategy
Like I-War, Robo Rumble is another title that crept out of the woodwork without any hype at all. RoboRumble is a real-time 3D strategy game that uses an awesome high-level 3D graphics engine allowing for features such as real-time lighting, shadow effects, real-time terrain morphing, transparencies and particle-based explosions. It looks great, and plays even better.
System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports the 3Dfx natively. This game supports Direct 3D.



Ultimate Race Pro



Front Page Sports Ski Racing Demo

Sierra
Sports
Released a little earlier, this title may have been in time for the Nagano Winter Olympics. Still, relive all those bone shattering downhill moments.
System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports Direct 3D. This game supports Force Feedback.

Touring Cars Demo

Sega
Racing
It's another Sega PC driving title. Touring Cars at least offers a decent frame rate in comparison to some of Sega's other racing offerings. The Sega blurb describes it by saying, "Touring Cars are born to book and you're just the driver to tempt the

power of a torque engine. Clinging to wicked curving courses at these speeds separates the racers from the day trippers, so sit tight and floor it, this is the real thing." The real thing?? Perlease.....
System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard.

Ultimate Race Pro Demo

Kalisto
Racing
Ultimate Race was THE Power VR show stopper and in my opinion the best driving game there was. Ultimate Race Pro feels the same and definitely delivers, but is nowhere near as aesthetically pleasing as the Power VR original. All comparisons aside though, Ultimate Race takes you on a high-speed thrill ride where the racing environment changes according to time of day, weather conditions, and opponents.
System requirements: Pentium 133, 16 Mb RAM, Soundcard. This game supports the 3Dfx, Power VR. This game supports Direct 3D. This game supports Force Feedback

*he power ha officially swit

UTILITIES

WebFerret

Ferretsoft
Internet

WebFerret queries large Web Search Engines to find quickly and efficiently whatever it is that you are looking for on the World Wide Web. WebFerret will query all configured search engines simultaneously, while discarding any duplicate results. Results that are returned (often within a second or two) can be acted upon immediately. New or updated search engines are added automatically to the application as they become available.

ICQ 98

Mirabilis
Internet

ICQ ("I Seek You") is a revolutionary, user-friendly Internet program that notifies you who's online at all times and enables you to initiate contact with those people at any time. No longer will you search in vain for friends or associates on the Internet. ICQ does the searching for you, alerting you in real time when they sign on.

With ICQ, you can chat, send messages and files, play games or just hang out with your fellow surfers while still surfing the Internet. The program runs in the background, taking up a minimum of memory and Internet resources. While you work on other applications, ICQ alerts you when friends and associates sign on, allowing you to work efficiently while having a whole range of Internet functions at your fingertips. Among the functions available are: chat, message, e-mail, URL and file transfer. ICQ also supports a variety of popular external Internet applications. With ICQ, launching an Internet phone or video call is a breeze. With a click of a button, you and your friend (or friends) are instantly connected. You can also

execute these events among multiple users, so you can conduct a conference or just hang out together online.

Gamespy

Critical Mass
Online Gaming

"Gamespy was born out of a desire to quickly find a playable Quake server. I must have spent a week looking at the finger output from servers@stomped.com and then manually pinging those IP addresses looking for a server with a decent response time.

While this accomplished my initial goal, it was hardly an acceptable solution. Hence, the birth of QSpy!" - Joe Powell

Gamespy and Id Software's QuakeWorld team up to create a revolution in online game playing. Now you can find great servers to play on, locate your friends wherever they may be and setup games using a real-time chat system without monthly or hourly fees!

Eudora Light

Qualcomm
Internet mail

Eudora mail has been around for quite a while servicing many a surfer's Internet mail needs. This is the latest version for you to try yourself.

Desktop News

Desktop News Corp
Internet

Desktop News' open network broadcast platform uses a PC desktop accessory to provide Windows users with a personalized news feed via a flexible, efficient and responsive Internet content delivery system. A low profile, low memory docking toolbar scrolls news headlines in a ticker-style display according to user defined preferences.

Cute FTP Professional Strength

Internet FTP

Another of the tried and true

must have Internet Utilities. Cute FTP besides having an excellent explorer like interface will work with just about any kind of Internet setup including firewalls.

4-Net

Cartoon Logic
Internet

4-Net is a comprehensive Internet tools package allowing you to indefinitely maintain your Internet connection by simulating Internet activity. It also has the potential to monitor your Internet connections latency or your file download speeds.

4-Net also includes many basic Internet utilities such as Ping, Finger, Traceroute, and Host name/IP address resolution. Ping a specified host to determine its network status, Finger a specific user or email address to find out detailed information about the user, and Traceroute to determine the route and speed of all information you send and receive on the Internet.

Beeline

Transcom

Internet Search Tool

Another Internet Desktop Search tool.

After Dark Online

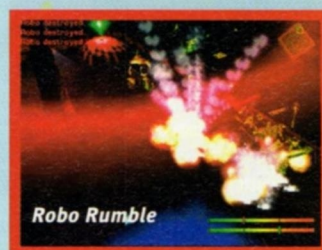
Berkely Systems
Internet Ticker

After Dark Online will receive news off the Internet all day and tick it across your screen either as a ticker, or when "screen saving".

Quiklink Explorer

Quiklink
Internet

Quiklink Explorer is an Internet Information Manager for Windows 95. It replaces your browser's bookmarks and makes



it simpler to add, maintain, and organize your favourite sites in a more familiar manner.

Quiklink Explorer looks and works very much like the Windows 95 Explorer. You organize your sites by creating and nesting folders, and storing your favourite sites within. Navigate folders and sites in the same manner you navigate Windows 95. Reorganizing your sites is just as easy, using the familiar cut, copy, paste routines, or simply drag and drop between folders! Already have a large list of bookmarks or favourites? Not to worry! Quiklink Explorer will easily import them, even keeping their original organization! To view a site, just double-click it's entry and Quiklink Explorer will open the site in the default browser. If your browser is not already running, Quiklink Explorer will even open it for you! You can even associate specific sites with specific browsers so that you can view those Navigator-enhanced sites with Netscape Navigator, and Internet Explorer-enhanced sites can be viewed with Internet Explorer.

s been ched on.



www.playstation.com.au

sidelines

The golf world's hottest property, Tiger Woods, has signed a deal with EA Sports for an undisclosed (although definitely hefty) sum. Well, actually it was Nike that did the deal with EA, because they kind of own him, but EA Sports almost immediately announced plans for a PC and Playstation golf game using the character of Woods. Just how important is Tiger Woods? Well, as a result of the announcement, shares in EA quickly jumped from US\$38 to US\$44 each!

The Microsoft juggernaut rolls on, and on and on. Their Internet gaming site, The Zone has reached more than 1 million members since its inception in 1995, and Microsoft are saying that at peak times The Zone (www.zone.com) is matching players for games at the rate of 1 1/2 million per month. But all this pales into insignificance with the staggering announcement that The Zone will begin to finally support Netscape browsers in a few months. No, really.

Still with browser war news, Netscape looks set to try and emulate the success and staying power of Quake/Q2 by releasing the source code for their browser and releasing professional editions of the Netscape suite at no cost to the public. It's sad that they've had to resort to such measures to keep up with the Microsoft juggernaut, but if this does indeed happen then expect some very funky new Netscape derivative browsers, and possibly even IE4/5 losing ground to Netscape.

Sick of those boring old Tamagotchi things yet? Well, Bandai digital entertainment has heeded the call of PowerPlay a few months back, and introduced a Tamagotchi game with a twist. The twist is that you breed, grow and care for your 'DigiMon' with the ultimate aim of putting it in a ring with other peoples DigiMon's and having them fight it out. Kind of like DigiPitBull, it seems, but there's no news yet on whether your DigiMon can get at Tamagotchi's and rip them to shreds. We can but hope.

Ion Storm, developers of the RTS game Dominion and John Romero's Daikatana have licensed the rights to use the Unreal engine for their upcoming (and tentatively titled) FPA game, 'Shooter'. "We are committed to creating immersive, revolutionary games with outstanding design and gameplay; and relationships, such as ours with Epic, are the means to attaining that goal" said Bob Wright, Ion Storms CEO. Guess they thought the Quake 2 engine (which is being used for Daikatana) wasn't quite up to scratch...

"This is your Captain speaking, we ain't going nowhere"

A few months ago, and pretty much every issue ever since, we've been evangelising the coming of the Next Generation of flight sims. Oh how excited we were, after 2-3 years of EF2000 and not much else, the PC skies were about to be filled with all manner of revolutionary new sims.

Unfortunately things look to



be coming apart at the seams. From Eidos we were expecting Flying Nightmares 2, and from MicroProse Falcon 4.0. These are the biggies. The Standard Running Joke in PC PowerPlay has always been that Falcon 4.0 will probably be released some time around the turn of the century. As it turns out, it's this title that's looking to be about the only one to show up in the near future. Of course, MicroProse have been steadily pushing the release date back over the years, but the demo's out and looking complete and MicroProse tell us that it'll be out by June.

The bad news is that "Flying Nightmares is currently under review", according to Eidos. We've run previews about this one on and off, but it looks like we got you too excited, too soon. We saw this at last year's E3 in June and it looked finished. The Eidos reps were dead set certain that it would ship for Christmas of 1997. This a major downer,



the game was designed for internet and network play, with a RTS-style "Commandant" playing a top down strategy game, sending units on missions - but the units would be real people flying in their simulated Harrier Strike Fighter or SuperCobra attack helicopter. That Eidos didn't bother with perfectly plausible excuses about internet latency is a worry, but we'll be getting to the bottom of this mystery!

Meanwhile, Microsoft's brilliantly simple and addictive Fighter Ace has been out and doing great business in America for almost 4 months. This is an online-only game that is a most

excellent alternative for those completely over Quake death-matching. But there's no local server, or concrete plans for one. Fighter Ace is played through Microsoft's Internet Gaming Zone (www.zone.com), and according to the Big M Australia is the second largest territory after America for usage of the service. That's still not enough



though, apparently. Local MS helpfults suggested that an even higher level of Australian patronage of The Zone is needed to give Fighter Ace any chance of getting off the ground. So there's your mission briefing readers, use The Zone lot's more, and while you're there, leave a message about how annoyed and insulted you are that the second most important games country in the world is being given such tardy treatment.

Meanwhile, Activision's Screamin' Demons Over Europe has been renamed Fighter Squadron and has been delayed at least 6 months... Oh the joy!

The 90 minute cutscene

In the past, the Mortal Kombat series and Street Fighter have made it to the big screen, but there are three computer games currently undergoing the transition to celluloid, and all have the potential to be more than low quality cash-ins, as with the above-mentioned two. Firstly, Chris Roberts' Wing Commander is in production, and seeing as how...cinematic the WC series ended up with him at the helm the indications are that it should be watchable (provided they can keep Mark Hamill away. And Bill Shatner). Nothing definite yet, but it's expected to be released sometime around the end of 1999.

However, also in the works (and it looks like it's definite this time around), the Doom movie is up and running. There's no word on the lead roles yet (though Arnie is of course the most popular choice), but some of the behind the scenes people have been named already. Ron Mita and Jim McClain were signed ages ago to do the adaptation, and Dino Conte and Moe Lospinoso are the producers of the movie. Who are these people? Who knows! But Doom: the

movie will take place on Earth, and the release is expected sometime in 1999. It's been a long time coming, but lets just hope that a) it comes out vaguely on time, and b) it isn't a pathetic Disney-esque fest aimed at 8 year old kiddies.

And the big one, the game that would seem to be most suited to a film adaptation is none other than your friend and ours, Mr Duke Nukem! The bad news is that the same company responsible for Mortal Kombat on the big screen has signed with GT for the movie production. Threshold Entertainment supremo Larry Kasanoff reckons that the under 25 audience wants more old fashioned machismo in movies today. Way cool! But on a sour note, Kasanoff is trying to get the rights to make the movie of the classic Zork game. Let's hope not. We think that while certain games will translate into movies well (or potentially well), Zork isn't one of these games.





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The screen shots speak
for themselves

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Ultim@te Race Pro™.

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"Jaw
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graphics and
scenery, excellent
car physics - and
now a decent
selection of tracks.
A very sexy game
gets even more
attractive"

PC Powerplay
January 1998



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MICRO PROSE

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sidelines

New and extremely highly profiled publishing "collective" Gathering Of Developers has gathered another potentially huge hit in the form of Max Payne. It's a 3D first person action/adventure game with a twist being developed by 3D Realms. G.O.D. had to wrest control over the title away from the gigantic GT Interactive, who have the rights to publish many other 3D Realms' games, and GT aren't saying much about what was surely an entertaining fracas other than that they 'passed' on the game and it went to G.O.D. by default. Yeah, sure.

Auran Interactive, creators of the excellent Dark Reign, are hard at work on their next project, which is based on the Harn universe created by Canadian fantasist N. Robin Crossby. The Harn role playing universe is revered worldwide for Crossby's commitment to quality, depth, and accuracy, and Auran are showing similar signs of commitment. They flew out Crossby to help them work on the game, which is as yet untitled, and he will be acting as a creative consultant during the development process. Considering how great DR was, and Auran's reputation as world class developers, it's sounding like a great game, but the bad news is that it's not expected until 1999.

It's kind of worrying, especially considering that a computer game adaptation of the movie 'War Games' is about to be released, but the technology that powered IBM's Deep Blue (the one that beat Garry Kasparov at chess) is to be used to safeguard America's nuclear stockpile. The technology will be used to create the fastest supercomputer in the world, capable of an astounding 10 trillion calculations per second. If it comes down to whether Big Billy C. or Deep Blue holds their finger on the trigger, I'm sure most of us would prefer the model that has the better control over the 'valves' in their nether region...

If you're anything like us, you will have looked at an arcade machine and wondered just what was inside exactly. Well, Acclaim have just announced what's going inside their new OOA (Open Arcade Architecture) arcade machine...and prepare to be surprised. Basically, it's a PC in a box; with an LX chipset, a 233MHz processor, 32MB SDRAM, 24 x CD, the Obsidian 100SB 3Dfx card, an Intel Pro 10/100 PCI Ethernet adaptor for linked play - and scarily enough; Windows 95. Big Billy G's strategy of world domination moves one step further; "Explorer has developed a general protection error in module 334XXDFCEEE000. Please insert more money".

Intel goes hard

Intel aren't just satisfied with dominating the chipset market anymore. They're looking to Microsoft out into other hardware areas, and already have a range of decent motherboards available. Latest new hardware toy

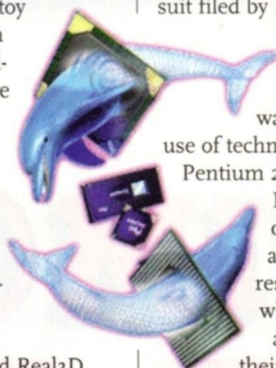
to grab their attention has been the 3D accelerator market. They've gone ahead and released their own accelerator chip, the Intel740 (or I740), which is designed for the AGP port on newer model motherboards (LX, BX, etc).

Already Diamond Multimedia, STB, and Real3D have already announced that they will be using the Intel chip with some of their boards, and these should be available as soon as sometime during the second half

of this year. Expect a full review from our techo boffins ASAP.

But it hasn't been a fantastic year for Intel so far, they recently co-released a press statement detailing the outcome of the lawsuit filed by National

Semiconductor (the parent company of Cyrix). The suit was filed over Intel's use of technologies in the Pentium 2 processor, which NS felt that they owned, or at least had a right to use. The result? Score 1 Cyrix, who are now legally allowed to develop their own Slot-1 P2 class chipsets, and score 0 Intel, who now have some serious competition in the P2 market. And then there's Intel's announcement that they have



Intel enters the 3D fray with the seemingly competent I740. Real3D - a US military hardware developer, will be integrating the chip onto their Starfire accelerator.

stopped producing Pentium class chips. Yes, it's over folks. Since the first Pentium chips rolled off the production line way back in around 1993, they've been the mainstay of gamers everywhere. But with all the new technologies that have sprung up, it's hard not to look forward with glee rather than backwards with misty eyes.

The Modem war is over!

Rockwell's x2 standard has been going head to head with 3Com's K56Flex technology, and it looked for a while as if neither would budge. However, the International Telecommunications Union jumped in and essentially laid down guidelines for making the rival technologies compatible, and thankfully both 3Com and Rockwell have decided to call it a draw. The result has been the all new V.90 standard, which provides for interoperability between both K56flex and x2. The kicker is that even though 56k V.90 modems will be on shelves very soon, you still shouldn't expect transfer rates approaching anywhere near 56k. For starters, it's only download speeds that can approach 56k, at best you can only really expect around 52k.

Still, it beats 33.6k modems, and when you're talking about online gaming speed is everything, so it's still worth thinking about, especially now that an agreement has been reached.

TOP TEN GAMES

Rank	Title	Developer / Distributor
1	7	QUAKE II
ID SOFTWARE / ROADSHOW		
2	1	AGE OF EMPIRES
MICROSOFT / VARIOUS		
3	2	RIVEN
BUNGIE-BRODERBUND / WOLF INTERACTIVE		
4	3	TOCA Touring Car Championship
CODEMASTERS / SEGA OZISOFT		
5	5	AFL '98
EA SPORTS / ELECTRONIC ARTS		
6	15	FIFA '98
EA SPORTS / ELECTRONIC ARTS		
7	9	BLADE RUNNER
WESTWOOD - VIE / DIGITAL LEISURE		
8	4	NEED FOR SPEED (Spec.ed)
ACCESS SOFTWARE / SEGA OZISOFT		
9	6	TOMB RAIDER II
CORE DESIGN-EIDOS / SEGA OZISOFT		
10	20	WING COMMANDER PROPHECY
ORIGIN / ELECTRONIC ARTS		

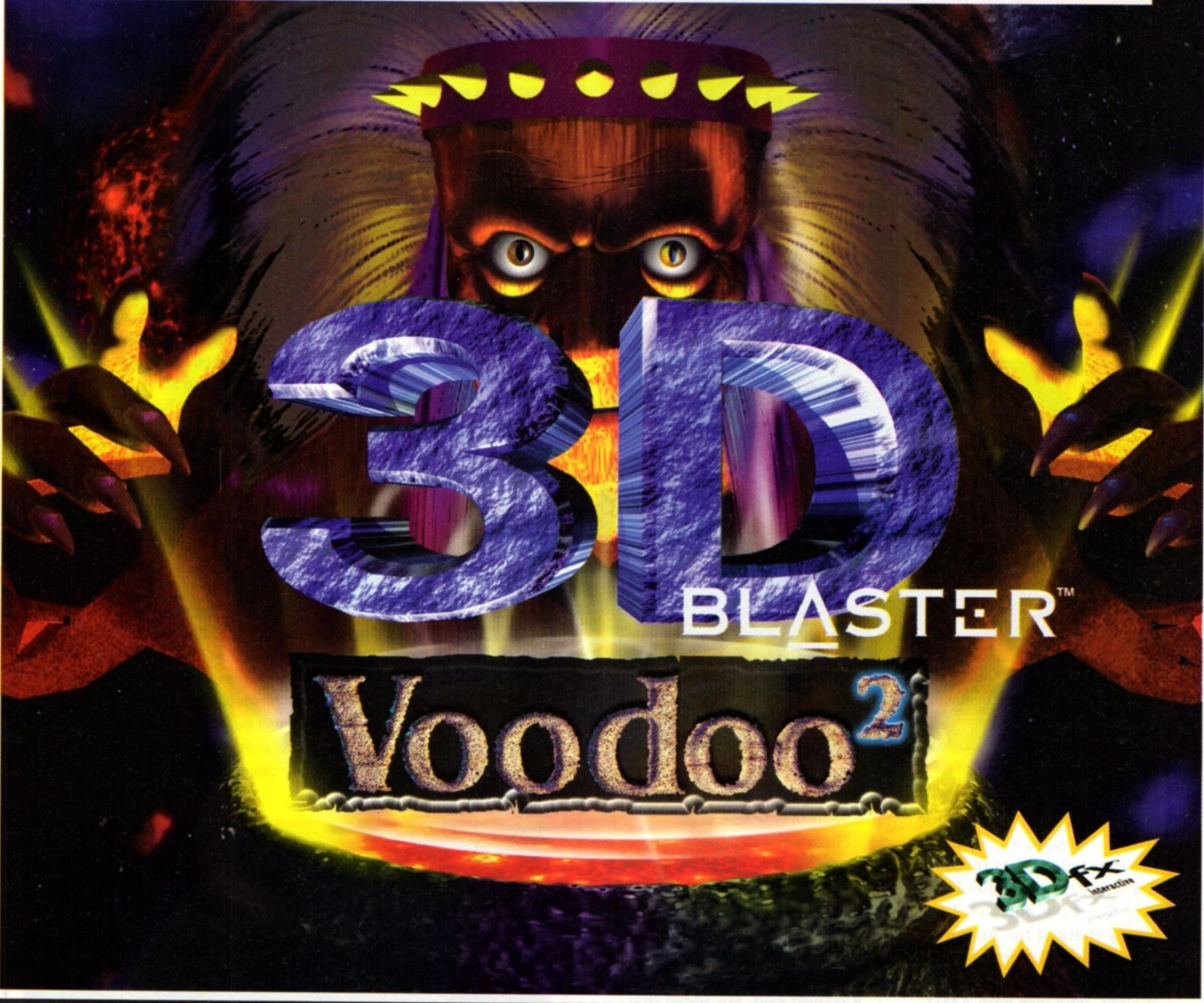
Week ending 15th February

The ACER best selling charts are carefully compiled from a sample panel of retailers selected across Australia including mass merchants, department stores, specialty software stores and independent outlets. Retailers surveyed include Myer Grace Bros, David Jones and John Martins, K Mart, Target, Big W, World 4 Kids, Harvey Norman Computer Super stores, Blockbuster, Brashes, Video Games Heaven and Games Wizards ©1997

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Bravo Boffo

In a smart move, Blizzard called in one of gamedom's premier gamers to tweak Starcraft. Blizzard reports that Infocom legend Steve Meretzky was called in to go over every puzzle in Starcraft and make suggestions and improvements.

Blizzard reported that Meretzky spent an entire week in the Blizzard offices not only going through the puzzles but also honing Starcraft's look as well. Starcraft will be Blizzard's first adventure game and should be on a store shelf near as we speak. By the way, the tall and lanky Meretzky now heads his own game house called Boffo games. His last creation was the under-rated Space Bar and the most excellent, but often over-looked puzzle collect Hodge 'n' Podge.



Calling all crows

European game maker Blue Byte has bought a US company in order to keep its finger in the American pie. Blue Byte says they have purchased an equity share of the Austin, Texas based Murder of Crows development house. Wade Walker, who was with AMD and former Origin hotshot Chris Todd, founded Murder of Crows in 1996. Currently Murder of Crows is working on an online game, but soon will be developing titles using Blue Byte's Extreme Vision 3D engine; the same engine used in Incubation and Extreme Assault.

Come and get some baby

With all the excitement of the Wing Commander now buzzing the gaming community comes word that another electronic hero is making his way to the silver screen. The makers of Mortal Kombat say they will be bringing

Duke Nukem to the movie screen maybe this year.

Hollywood producer Larry Kasanoff is bankrolling the venture. "We believe the self-proclaimed politically incorrect Duke Nukem character naturally fits into the broader entertainment marketplace," Kasanoff said. He added that because of the nature of the game, that the movie will have kickin' special effects and a wealth of storylines.

Kasanoff's Threshold Entertainment inked the movie deal with Duke's bossman, Scott Miller of 3D Realms. "We're certain that with Threshold's top talent and experience we can make a hit that starts a long-lived and prosperous Duke movie franchise," Miller said.

It is hard to make a movie based on a PC game, but Threshold was fairly successful with the Mortal Kombat series, although the movies were not critical successes.

GT is getting' richer

It's only taken about a year and some for GT Interactive to become a mega-publisher and their latest profit report probably has some executives dancing nakkid on the street with joy. GT reports their 1997 fourth quarters results were 58% higher than 1996. Yep, they had sales of almost \$214 million. GT says the Christmas season was especially good because of sales of Abe's Oddysee and Duke Nukem for consoles. For the year, GT reported sales of over \$500 million nearly half again better than all of 1996.

But it does seem GT will need the extra cash. Yet another lawsuit has been filed against GT by a group of unhappy stockholders. This is the third such suit filed against GT alleging the company mislead investors by fudging their financial records.

Man, I wished I had bought GT stock...you win no matter what.

Brazil just says nada to Grand Theft Auto

First Postal got pulled from the CompUSA shelves, now comes word that the entire country of Brazil has banned Grand Theft Auto.

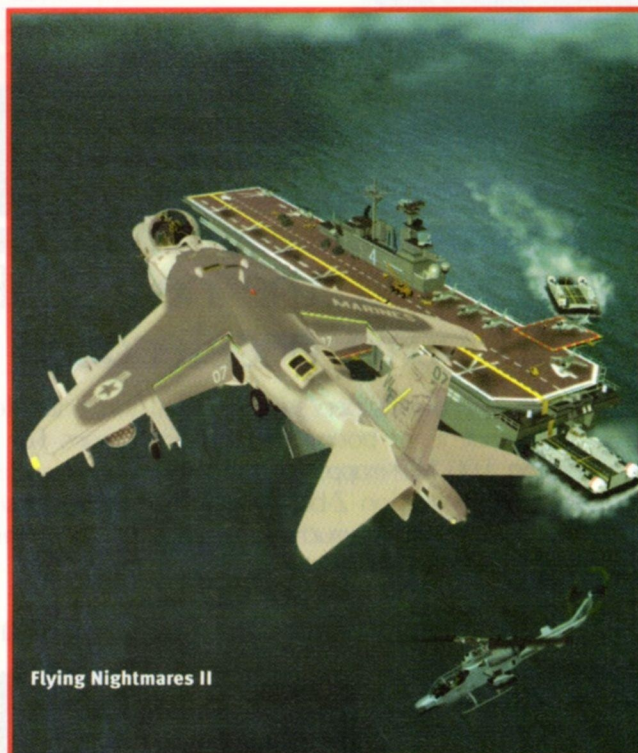
The game, published in the US by ASC, allows you to play a car theft and you have to play a criminal in order to beat the game. Brazil thinks it has good reason for the ban. There are statistics that shows the greatest cause of death among its youth is homicide, with some attribution to stealing cars and the alarming rate of highway deaths.

Late last year, Brazil banned Carmageddon and warns that any store found selling Grand Theft Auto will be fined nearly \$9,000, a hefty sum in any country.

Eidos Walker

French publisher Eidos says they will soon be coming out with a new Tomb Raider collector's edition, but that doesn't help Bryan Walker any. Walker is...or make that was...Eidos in-house flight sim expert working on Flying Nightmares II. Now, Eidos says they have grounded the flight sim and Walker has left the hangar.

As for the Nightmares team, they will be assigned to Confirmed Kill. In the meanwhile, Walker does have another gig, which is good, because the Gulf War veteran really does know his gunships, but we don't where quite yet.



Flying Nightmares II



System 3 Ramp Up

System 3, responsible for bucket loads of hit 8 bit games, and more recently Constructor on the PC are working on 5 games due nearer the end of the year. Their games are not only an impressive feature of technical programming - all running on P90s but GAMEPLAY is the buzz word. Return of Last Ninja, Constructor 2, Myth, Vendetta, Hordes are just some of the delights in store. More on this next issue!



NMS rule

It's a real pity that there are no pictures forthcoming, but heck this game from NMS called Emperor looks a real scorcher and you are the first to hear about it. If you are into games with a mix of Civilisation and Dark Reign - ones with depth, intrigue, loads of strategy, and resource management then NMS, who are famous for titles such as Mass Destruction and Risk, appear to have moved the strategy game on a step further, and that is no mean feat!

Offering many original ideas, you will be hearing a lot about this game over the next few months!

A neat Scotch

Lately I've been ranting about a Scottish developer called Creative Edge. You read a bit about their up and coming game called Casino Kit which is a sim world based around building your own

Casino. Well, it looks like SCI have signed this game but when you see the intro to a new game they have coming called Solar you will flip. OK, its is a roo meg intro but it is cool and is quite stunning. The game itself is described as Creative Edge's own Populous 3 come Warcraft and presents some really interesting worlds and interaction, with animation looking almost real. The screen supplied does not do it justice, but once again another one to look out for.

Incidentally, a few of their team are ex DMA (Lemmings guys) so they have an impressive team of experts!

Pinball fans!

Played loads of Pinball games? Fed up with them? Feel that they don't offer anything new? Well, once again, the Brit pack have gone one better. Pinball Games, a newly formed developer, with many staff from other leading publishers are acquiring the licenses for a massive number of tables and the real beauty is that they are working with the licensor to ensure each table offers an immersive feel. Judge Dredd will be the first table on offer.

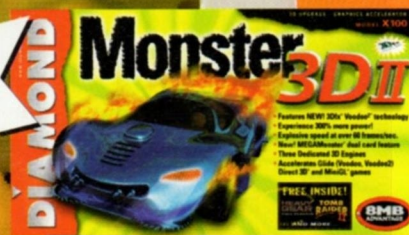
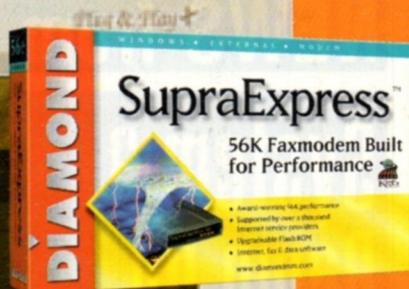
In conjunction with DC Comics, they have created a table dripping with Judge Dredd

atmosphere. Add tables from the Muppets, Roswell Incident, a soccer one that two players can challenge each other over, plus eight others on the way and you can see where they are going. The tables have so much attention to detail and interaction they will blow away all the other competition. Judge Dredd should please everyone and there's an awesome array of features for each table. Being a pinball freak and having played the table, I can vouch for this! Pinball Games look set to become the definitive Pinball games developers!

Judge Dredd - the pinball



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The Diamond Quake 2 Mega Machine

It's hot, it's damn hot! This baby is comparable to our Ultimate Gaming Beast, featured over the past two issues. It's big and beastly enough to send anyone into gaming nirvana for the foreseeable future. Courtesy of the lovely folks at Diamond Multimedia & Microarts Computers, if you subscribe you could find yourself not only reading about the latest and coolest games in PC PowerPlay each month, but playing them on a machine that your friends will only be able to dream about, and best of all it includes Diamond's new Voodoo 2 card as well! It's called the Quake 2 Mega Machine because Quake 2 will look absolutely jaw dropping on it, but then again so will every other game too. Check this out;

Microarts Power Pro™ Viper

Microarts have been bringing you the best in PC systems for years now, and this baby is their latest, hottest gaming machine offering.

Intel Pentium II 300MHz processor

The guts behind your gaming grunt. This is what you want to make things go fast. And boy, is 300MHz fast!

64MB SDRAM (expandable to 384MB)

16MB? You gotta be kidding! 32MB...well, maybe. But 64MB is essential for any hard core gamer, and SDRAM is as fast as it gets.

Viewsonic 17" Monitor

You wouldn't want to waste all that speed and power on a 15 inch monitor would you? Viewsonic are the goods too, and this is one of their best monitors.

2x Diamond Monster 3D II Graphics Accelerator

Ooooooh yes! This is the best ever gift from the gods of gaming to us all. One Monster 3D II card is tops, but two together in 'Mega Monster Mode' (SLI) is as good as it gets!

Quantum Fireball 6.48 GB Ultra SCSI Hard Drive

SCSI is the hard drive of choice for high end servers world wide, and it's the kind of grunty component that gamers not only need but want. Extremely fast data throughput, and just all round performance that IDE drives can't hold a candle to. Price usually keeps it out of the range of the average gamer, but not if you win it...

Diamond Fireport 40 Dual SCSI Host Adaptor

Well, a SCSI Hard Drive without an adaptor would be a bit silly wouldn't it? Fireport offers state of the art hard-drive speed.

Diamond Monster Sound M80

The latest in Diamond's brilliant 3D sound card range. It's almost a given that if you're serious about immersive game playing, you want a Diamond Monster Sound.

Diamond SupraExpress 56k Modem

Ahhh, a fast modem is almost like an unfair advantage when you're playing games online. Others have to wait for their old, slow modems to send and receive data, but by the time they realise what's happening you've fragged them and moved on to your next victim. Joy!

24 x CD Rom Drive

And what game doesn't come on CD nowadays? An indispensable component for any computer system, and at 24 X you should see some lightning data transfers. Gone forever will be the days when you had time to make a cup of coffee while the game installed to your hard drive.

Altec Lansing ACS45 Speaker System with Subwoofer

Altec Lansing rock! Not only do you receive clear, crisp sound from their speakers and subwoofer, but they look cool too! Combine these speakers with your Monster Sound M80 and annoy family, friends and neighbours with the ground shaking BOOM from your double shotty. Oh yes!

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D Barker, Warrnambool VIC
I Schmidt, Shalvey NSW
Anthony Hunt, Hope Valley SA

PLUS FREE GAMES CD!

We've managed to talk Metro Games into giving us 1000 Blue Byte demo CDs. Each has playable demos of Incubation, Extreme Assault, Archimedean Dynasty, Settlers 2, Albion and much more. While stocks last we'll be sending one to each new subscriber and renewer.



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REDFERN NSW 2016

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Point release finally arrives - and it's buggy!

You heard right, the much-vaunted, eagerly awaited Quake2 'point' release (version 3.12) is embarrassingly buggy. Unbelievably, after weeks of beta testing with Activision, the patch that was supposed to fix 150+ bugs still left in version 3.10, does not install properly in most cases, failing with an error and stuffing up your current version, meaning a re-install for some. Naturally, John Carmack is pissed, and barely hides it in his .plan update. If you manage to get it working (installing the patch 3 times worked for me), you can expect to see a new character, the cyborg, which should prove fun for multiplayer. He's just a different model with new sounds though, so don't expect super powers or anything. There's also 8 new deathmatch maps, heaps of bug fixes (if you can overlook the first one) and finally some co-op action. Now all we gotta

do is sit back and wait for all the servers to upgrade...

The good news is that iD are going back to their roots and using the public as beta testers once again. Looks like we may have to wait for 3.13 - is that a good idea for a version number?

ZOID'S CTF RELEASE

Released at the same time as the Point release is Zoid's Capture the Flag release. At the time this article went to print, there were no Quake II CTF servers in the Land of Oz, so I can't report on too much. The reports those lucky Americans give us, with their glut of bandwidth and Quake servers, is droolworthy. Of course, you need Quake 3.12 to run it, so good luck in getting it to work :) Both the point release and CTF are available from <http://www.quake2.com>.

MORE MODS

They just keep a-coming, and they're getting better, too. The cream of the crop this month would have to be Damagematch (<http://dd.networx.net.au>) a mod that scores you based on damage inflicted, not frags and Rocket Arena 2 (<http://planetquake.com/servers/arena>), a conversion of one of Quake's most popular mods. My favourite so far would have to be Superheroes 2 (<http://www.planetquake.com/modsquad/super2/index.htm>), a client-side mod that gives you special powers to take on the forces of evil and is, in short, friggin brilliant. Download. Play. Now.

DOWN UNDER

Check out Death's Domain, a tres cool-Quake 2 site at <http://dd.networx.net.au>.

They've got patches, skins, models, mods, utilities and anything else that takes your fancy, as well as a huge list of Australian servers updated every 10 minutes or so. Be warned though - they're based in Perth, so don't let that ping deceive you.



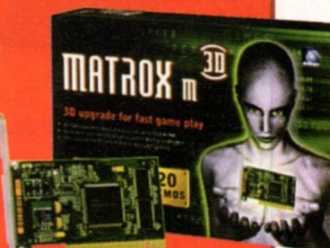
Two of Q2's forthcoming competitors: (top) Blood 2 and (above) Daikatana

WIN a M3D Accelerator!

The Stone Age, the Ice Age, the Industrial Era, the Sexual Revolution and now, the 3D Accelerator Age. Yep, there's a lot to live for right now, as anyone who's played 3D Accelerated Quake 2 will testify. The Matrox M3D PowerVR-based card is a nice 3D Accelerator. Based on the potent NEC PowerVR chipset, it'll do wonders for your non-accelerated system. Thanks to the generous people at Focal Point Computing we've got 5 Matrox M3D's to give away. Nice huh? Just write the answer to the following easy question on the back of an envelope and send it to:

M3D Comp.
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St
Redfern NSW 2016

Q. What was the default weapon in Wolfenstein 3D?



COMPETITIONS

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope.

All entries close April 23, 1997

Entries to:

PC PowerPlay, 78 Renwick st.
Redfern NSW 2016

**This could
be YOU!**

Fallout

Be in Fallout 2!!!!

Oh what joy! Imagine having gamers around the world clicking on YOU in a game, then either cursing your stupidity or praising your cunning. It's as good as it gets, and thanks to Interplay you're going to get a go. We'll draw a winner from the correct entries received, then Interplay will put your name to a character in the forthcoming Fallout 2. Cool cool cool. Naturally you'll have to be pretty familiar with the original Fallout, as the questions are tough. Good luck!

1. What is the real name of the Master?
2. What does Loxley want you to steal from the Hightowers?
3. Tycho was a member of what organization?
4. Who is in the painting found on the dead alien at the flying saucer crash site?
5. Who founded the Brotherhood of Steel?
6. What animals escaped during the development and testing of FEV?
7. What games does Zax want to play with you?
8. Who is a living god?
9. If you have absorbed radiation,

what drug should you take?

10. What's the fake Iguana-on-a-Stick made from?

Red Alert Collectors' Edition

You may already have a copy of Red Alert, if you do, you probably think it's pretty cool - think that's cool? THIS is cool. The special Red Alert Collectors Edition features, amazingly, the game, plus a very special Red Alert mouse (why is it so special? Because it's got Red Alert printed on it, that's why), plus an equally special Red Alert mouse pad to roll your new mouse around on. Fantastic! Six copies to win.

Q. What's the class name for Russia's giant ballistic missile submarines (the world's largest of their kind)?

Saitek X-36 Programmable Stick and Throttle

Saitek has landed in Australia! A slow year after the rest of the world, we're finally able to enjoy a truly excellent alternative to the well entrenched market leaders. Read up on the Saitek range in this month's Hot Hardware section, they look incredible and do

the job very well. Thanks to the kind n'caring folks at Innovision, who have brought Saitek into Australia (as well as many other fine gaming peripherals), we've got three of the top of the line X-36 packs to give away. In each pack is the fully programmable X-36 Throttle and the X-36 Joystick. Fantastic stuff this.

Q. What type of Soviet aircraft, then top secret, did a defecting Russian pilot kindly deliver to the Japanese?

6 x Mysteries of Sith

Jedi Knight is our second favourite 1st Person Action game of all time. The arrival of this addon caused great excitement in the offices of PCPP and thankfully it's fully worthy as a great way to pass the game time. Due to a poorly filled out shipping docket, some poor Sydney retailers' stock got sent to us by mistake, so, we're gonna have a competition and give them away before someone figures it out!

Q. Who played Greedo in Star Wars and what shoes were they wearing?

Issue # 21 winners Well done you clever, clever people!

QUAKE2 (PAUL STEED)

J Mehegan, Waratah NSW
C Avery, Robertson NSW
A Marks, Northfield SA
J Pettigrove, Mt Martha VIC
C Wilmont, Gosnells WA
M Cohen, Lindfield NSW

MONKEY ISLAND 3 (RHESUS MONKEY)

K Watson, Grafton NSW
P Gili, Toongabbie NSW
E Harris, Buttaba NSW
H Dare-Edwards, Wagga Wagga NSW
M Conolly, Shelly Beach NSW
R Leasle, Moruya NSW

I - WAR (WERNER VON BRAUN)

S Nelson, Sale VIC
M Brady, Bardonia QLD
S Bailey, Floreat Park NSW
M Cregan, Lismore NSW
A Camilleri, Gordon VIC
D Duymouich, Riverstone NSW

**Greedo in the original
Jedi Knight**



DAVID WILDGOOSE and the

LOST

IN THE SPACE OF JUST A FEW YEARS, THE ADVENTURE GAME HAS SLIPPED FROM BEING THE DOMINANT GENRE, TO ITS CURRENT SAD STATE OF ONLY A HANDFUL OF MEDIOCRE TITLES EACH YEAR. NOW, WITH THE STRONGEST RANGE OF QUALITY GAMES WE'VE SEEN IN YEARS COMING, THE ADVENTURE GAME IS SET TO RETURN.

Disillusioned Gamers

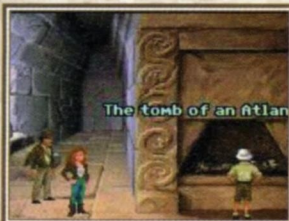
Eager to see how my selection of the best games of 97 compared with yours, wise reader, I soon found myself perusing the Game Of The Year poll results in our January edition. Upon spying that the major award had gone to Diablo, I nodded respectfully, quietly pleased but not surprised that this worthy title had won your favour. The winner of the very next category, though, prompted me to raise an eye-

brow, while its runner-up nearly caused me to fall off my considerably ergonomic swivel chair. Dogday had been voted best adventure game of 1997 - this alone was enough to raise some mild alarm. But with City Of Lost Children finishing in second place, well, let's just say that if I were a comic strip character there would be a speech bubble full of "#!\$&!%#!" floating above my head.

An Adventure in Democracy

Sure, I realise that the voting system was flawed. Several randomly selected games and an "other" box is never going to be the fairest or most representative manner of choosing anything. For one, it encourages everyone to vote only for one of the listed games (A-to Cuba, as runner-up flight sim, was the only unlisted title to poll well). For two, it encourages those people who haven't played an adventure game (or just don't like the genre) to also vote for one of those games already listed, something which they probably would not have done if none had been supplied. But, you might anticipate that an enthusiastic response from genuine adventure gamers pledging support for other titles would cancel out such flaws. I certainly did. After viewing the initial voting form I just expected people would write down the likes of Broken Sword 2, The Last Express, Discworld 2, etc, all of which were eligible for the award. You didn't. From this, then, I can only conclude - with some sorrow, too - that there is a large number of gamers (a significant majority, if you

INDIANA JONES: FATE OF ATLANTIS



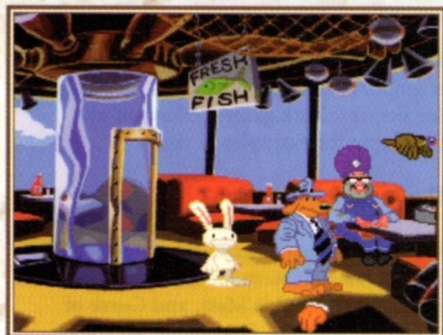
SIMON THE SORCERER 2



SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD



ADVENTURE



like) who simply don't play adventure games anymore.

Let's investigate. why are adventures currently unfashionable? Which future developments will reinstate their popularity?

The Golden Age of Gaming

Back in the 80's and early 90's, the adventure game was king. Infocom were legends, Sierra were gods and LucasArts stole our hearts with every release. If Leisure Suit Larry was the game world's most (in)famous character, then Guybrush Threepwood, star of the Monkey Island series, was its most lovable hero. Journeying through the Zorkian underground was a favourite pastime. While attempting to get that damn Babel fish in your ear was a stern initiation test, the passing of which would forever guarantee your place in the Adventure Hall of Fame - or at least as a name whispered in reverent tones at the local thieves guild. So ubiquitous were such games that it was almost taken for granted that if you were a PC gamer, you were an adventure gamer, too. Beyond some hard-core flight sims or RPGs and the odd incomprehensible wargame, there was nothing else but adventure games to play.

During the last few years, of course, it's all been real-time strategy and 1st-person shoot

'em ups around here. Adventure gamers, seeking tranquil refuge from such click and/or gore-fests, have been starved of quality titles. Even trying to survive on a diet of the mediocre games has proved nutritionally inadequate, thanks to the gradually shrinking number of releases. Seemingly, however, this trend is beginning to reverse. If 1994-96 were terrible, agonising years for adventure gaming, 1997 did at least ease that pain with soothing alms from Westwood, LucasArts and Smoking Car. For not only did the quality of the games increase, but last year also saw the development of several important gameplay innovations that matched the great technical strides the genre has made over the same period.

The point of this feature is to illustrate what I believe will be a huge shift in the coming years over what constitutes adventure gameplay. We've seen the first inklings of this shift in a few releases during 1997. From inventory, object-manipulation puzzles to character-based interaction and dialogue, from strict linearity to branching multi-story plots, if you like. From point and click adventuring to participation in the first genuine interactive movies.

Evolution

It all began, as you probably know, back in the 1970's with a text game called Cave (or under its various guises as Adventure or Colossal Cave, among many more). You read a brief description of your present location and then typed in simple instructions, such as "Unlock door with key" or whatever, in the hope of being rewarded with further descriptions of other locations. During the late 70's and early 80 text adventures became steadily more sophisticated, thanks mostly to the work of Infocom, creators of Zork, A Mind Forever Voyaging, Lurking Horror, and numerous classic titles. With the level of interaction rarely raising itself above "halfwit", however, playing these games was often no more enjoyable than gnawing off your own limbs.

Adventure Trivia Question No.1 - Which game let you go bungee jumping from the nostril of an American president at Mt Rushmore? With a lurid green rope?

Answer: Sam & Max, of course. The only game more relaxing than being locked in a moving car with a delusional psychotic.

While it's all very well to keep on congratulating the likes of LucasArts for releasing classic games like Sam & Max and Indiana Jones, both games ARE over five years old. The genre need to be revitalised and, whatever its faults (and there are plenty), that's exactly what the success of Riven has done

TOONSTRUCK



11TH HOUR



MYST 2: RIVEN



attempting to get that damn babel fish in your ear was a stern initiation test, the passing of which would forever guarantee your place in the adventure hall of fame - or at least as a name whispered in reverent tones at the local thieves guild

Adventure Trivia
Question No.2 - If you were playing one of the games pictured below, which one would most likely have you recording the gruesome efforts of two desperate actors awkwardly groping each other to create the world's first (and last) interactive soap opera?

point of view.
most depressing.
game ever or the
funniest
Answer: Voyeur 2.

You couldn't find a greater contrast than the one between the three games below and the trio opposite. Here, haphazard collections of FMV and logic puzzles precariously balanced upon wafer-thin plots. There, lovingly constructed examples of great story-telling which combine seamlessly with smartly designed puzzles and interesting, identifiable characters.

Soon, though, we would be playing with graphics. Pseudo-3D backdrops populated by animated, sprite-based characters became the norm throughout the 80 and into the early 90, most famously exemplified by Sierra's King's Quest and LucasArts' Maniac Mansion. Participating in adventures in these worlds frequently left you with the feeling you were little more than an errand boy (dashing here and there, ferrying objects back and forth). And, with the mundane tasks and illogical puzzles constantly impeding your progress, you seemed at the mercy of some singularly cruel greater being (i.e. the game designer).

Brighter times were ahead, thankfully. LucasArts gave us the first two spectacularly amusing Monkey Island games and, with Day of the Tentacle, the inventory-heavy, object-manipulation puzzle-based point-and-click adventure reached its nadir, in my opinion. Gosh, have you ever seen so many hyphens in one sentence!? Interestingly, the oft-forgotten LucasArts title of the same time, Indiana Jones & the Fate of Atlantis, with its multiple solutions and three different routes to the finish, was in many ways ahead of its time and can be seen as a small precursor to what's happening now.

The Dark Ages of FMV

The early and mid 90's are where I think adventure games lost the plot a bit. Literally, they lost the plot. Excited by the size of a game allowed by CD ROM technology, or perhaps because too many game developers fancied themselves as movie directors, adventure gaming, like some other genres at the time, descended into the period now known as "FMV HELL". Games like Phantasmagoria and Voyeur lead the charge here, adding real actors and tedious video cut-scenes at the expense of those little things like interesting plots and player interaction. Tsk.

Somewhere in the middle of all this mess, Cyan brought out an obscure fantasy game called Myst. Featuring no animation, flick-screen movement, no dialogue, interaction limited to fiddling with gadgets and plenty of book reading, it soon became the best-selling PC game of all time. Why? Because it looked pretty and cleverly garnered much attention from the mainstream press. Myst has spawned the inevitable clones, which have met with underwhelming success, and I sus-



pect its influence has been more in the style of graphics than its still, airless gameplay. See the new Zork games, Obsidian or Timelapse for examples of this.

The Present

So now that we've reached 1998, where does the adventure genre stand? The two big titles of last year were Riven, the frankly uninspired sequel to Myst, and Curse of Monkey Island, the final in the MI trilogy. Riven was virtually identical to Myst - just what had Cyan been up to for four years? And as entertaining as something like CMI is (and it is a great game, don't get me wrong), it is a quite limited and old-fashioned game. Ultimately it's not really any different to the early graphic adventures such as King's Quest or Maniac Mansion.

Adventure gaming, aside from mere cosmetic additions like improved visuals and full speech, has barely progressed during this decade. In that time we've watched a once great style of game fall under the burden of illogical puzzles, stifling linearity, restrictive and contrived interaction, and far too many sliding-block games (don't get me started on The 7th Guest, please!). Until now, only Myst has challenged the orthodoxy, although it too suffers from many of these problems plaguing the genre.

Yet two games released this year point the way towards a bright new future for adventure gaming. But Blade Runner and The Last Express, for they are the special two, really only hint at the possibilities of the future. Hopefully they will be recognised in the years to come as instigators of a new breed of adventure in which you have genuine freedom of choice. You meet a suspected replicant, do you shoot and kill or let him go free? You become aware of an arms deal, do you side with the Serb rebels or the German, or do you play

VOYEUR



PHANTASMAGORIA 2



SHIVERS 2





them off against each other? These are just the nascent, primitive beginnings.

How It Should Be

The most common complaint against adventures is that they are "too linear". But, for me, the argument is not about linearity or non-linearity. Such descriptions are at best unhelpful and at worst ridiculously misleading. Advances in artificial intelligence coupled with dynamic scripting techniques will assist the creation of continuous, multi-stranded stories in a real-time environment. I'm talking here of genuine interactive movies. However, despite its much abused past (the aforementioned *Voyeur* and *Phantasmagoria*), this is not a term to be wary or afraid of. I've made a point of using it twice so far to make you (and myself) feel more comfortable with it.

A Great Adventure

Complete freedom of choice is a misnomer, of course. We don't have it in life, and we can't have it in games either. Necessarily, the freedom a game allows us must be constrained in certain ways. You cannot when playing *Quake*, for example, choose to reason with that Shambler and try to sort out your differences in a rational debate. No, you have to shoot him. Likewise, in an adventure game, if the world needs saving from the evil hands of a crazed political leader, then you cannot have the option of popping down the pub for a quick game of pool and leave the world-saving to someone else. No, you have to try to stop him. (Yes, this should mean being able to either shoot him OR reason with him in a rational manner!)

Imagine a game in which your actions have varied and meaningful consequences, possibly forcing you to make ethical and moral decisions. Providing you with the freedom-in-

situation of life, but with a computer game's ability to let you rewind or restart that life. Adventure games ought to be about discovery and experimentation, about trying different things. The typical adventure up until now has presented you with a fixed story, a pre-determined character for you to guide through that story, and an assortment of carefully designed obstacles for that character to encounter along the way. There's only one future - one pre-destined path - in these games, and that means there can be no freedom of choice.

There's a semi-philosophical theory that suggests there are millions of parallel universes, all operating simultaneously. Each moment of our lives presents an infinite array of possible outcomes - but we, in our particular universe, only experience one of these. The theory implies that no outcome or universe is more important than any other. So it should be in computer games. There should not be a so-called main story, there should be a number, at least half a dozen (let's keep it practical!), of diverse and rewarding endings.

Interaction in these games has to become more realistic and more conventional. We need to get away from using Patently Absurd Object X with Perverse Item Y to produce Incredibly Silly Event Z. We need, instead, to talk to other characters, conduct intelligible conversations with convincing dialogue. This need not mean forsaking the use of recorded speech - we don't need to actually write the dialogue ourselves (although you may consider this to be the ultimate goal!), but we need to be able to choose what we say, to whom and when we say it.

In terms of game structure, our character obviously has to be placed in some environment in which he or she has a certain goal in mind (but it ought to be up to us as to how, or indeed whether, he or she reaches that goal). This environment we inhabit should give the impression of existing beyond the current screen or location. Thus, other characters, too, must have their own goals, either competing or utterly different ones. To maintain the illusion they must react in varied ways to our character's varied actions, all the while still attempting to accomplish their individual goals.

The Future

Well, that's my blueprint for the future. Does it sound promising? Exciting? Or a load

we need to get away from using patently absurd object x with perverse item y to produce incredibly silly event z. we need, instead, to talk to other characters, conduct intelligible conversations with convincing dialogue

BROKEN SWORD 2



CALLAHAN'S SALOON



LAST EXPRESS



SOME TIPS FOR PRESENT AND POTENTIAL ADVENTURE GAME DESIGNERS ATTEMPTING TO COME UP WITH THE PERFECT ADVENTURE GAME.

Adventure Trivia Question No.3 - What would you be doing if you said to someone, "You fight like a dairy farmer!", and they replied, "How appropriate. You fight like a cowl!"?

Answer: Insult-sword-fighting on Monkey Island. "Look, behind you... a three-headed monkey!"

Below are three of the best adventures of last year. Imagine insult-swordfighting with Dr Funfrack, giving Guybrush the Voight-Kampf test, and McCoy trading in his spinner for Twinsen's car. Now that's the perfect adventure!!

DO take the time to produce great, convincing dialogue from believable characters. e.g. The utterly credible cast of The Last Express

DON'T give us chats with isolated, stereotypical characters littered with occasional wacky one-liners that have little relevance to the game as a whole. e.g. Simon The Sorcerer 2's pointless array of one-dimensional characters brought together to no discernable positive effect.

REASON - The perfect adventure needs a consistent, coherent and continuous game world and its characters are perhaps the most important ingredient.

DO have the action as a central part of the actual gameplay. e.g. Blade Runner when you chase down replicants.

DON'T leave the action in the cut-scenes. This is a game, remember, not a film. e.g. Phantasmagoria's deeply tedious "click-and-watch" approach to adventuring.

REASON - The perfect adventure should makes us feel part of the story, and for this crucial events need to be under our control. I don't want to just watch, I want to be part of what happens.

DO use visual technology that is appropriate for the atmosphere and setting of the game. E.g. Curse Of Monkey Island's brilliant comic inventions.

DON'T believe that featuring "real actors" and FMV instantly confers realism upon your latest so-called Interactive Movie. Culprits include Voyeur, Ripper, Urban Runner, A Fork In The Tale, et al

REASON - The perfect adventure is, quite frankly, nothing at all like Voyeur.

DO maintain visual consistency throughout all game and cut scenes. e.g. The excellent cartoon animation used superbly throughout Broken Sword.

DON'T stick real actors onto drawn or rendered back-

grounds, and vice versa. e.g. Toonstruck, despite its bloke trapped in a cartoon world plot.

REASON - The perfect adventure needs to look congruous like the former, and not stupid like the latter. That old 'suspension of disbelief' is pretty significant here

DO make it impossible to get stuck and need to restore. All actions, even "wrong" ones, ought to always lead to definite endings. e.g. The Last Express and Blade Runner, again, for obvious reasons.

DON'T lead us into dead-ends. Saying the wrong thing to someone or using an object before time or incorrectly should not mean an instant reload. e.g. Callahan's Crosstime Saloon (I got stuck because I'd put on a pair of fake lips before I'd done something else to them, but I couldn't take them off again and so had to restore - aargh!) and most Sierra games (which suffer from sudden death syndrome)

REASON - The perfect adventure is dynamic and multi-stranded, but isn't restrictive and illogical.

DO include plenty of cool and entertaining "easter eggs" for us to discover and distract ourselves with. e.g. Twinsen's car, or playing Wak-a-Rat with Sam & Max.

DON'T fill your game with any of the following: jigsaw puzzles (Shivers 2), sliding block puzzles (Atlantis), sound puzzles (Torin's Passage), or indeed anything from The 7th Guest/11th Hour.

REASON - The perfect adventure will be fun and exciting, not a fruitless exercise in teeth-gnashing frustration

DO use your imagination and creativity.

DON'T slavishly copy what's gone before.

REASON - You'll come closer to creating the perfect adventure.

of bollocks? Admittedly, at this stage, given current technologies, it may appear somewhat impractical, but you can see the seeds of such ideas have taken root in games like

The Last Express and Blade Runner. I can only hope there will be plenty more to come. And that more gamers will be willing to give them a try.

CURSE OF MONKEY ISLAND



BLADERUNNER



TWINSIN'S ODYSSEY



THE REIGN CONTINUES.



DARK REIGN™

EXPANSION

RISE OF THE SHADOWHAND



WHEN THINGS GO WELL, YOU DON'T NOTICE HIM. GET THE SLIGHTEST GLITCH, HOWEVER, AND YOU'RE READY TO TAKE HIS HEAD OFF. HE'S THE MAN WHO STRINGS WORLDS AND WEBS TOGETHER, LETS YOU KILL YOUR FRIENDS AND PROVIDES THE BACKBONE FOR ON-LINE GAMING. HE'S THE NET GUY.

opment as teams juggle huge amounts of code, data and animations, often from multiple sites.

Mark Rizzo knows all of this all too well. As the network engineer behind Ultima Online at Origin, he's quite literally in a field all his own, but certainly at the top of his profession. He's seen it all, and in PC PowerPlay's continuing behind-the-scenes series, he tells it all, too.

The Tech Guy

PCPP: There are a lot of people who would want to do what you do for a living. In the simplest terms, what does your job involve?

MR: Network engineers usually handle all Local area and Wide area communications. We maintain and create all the infrastructure

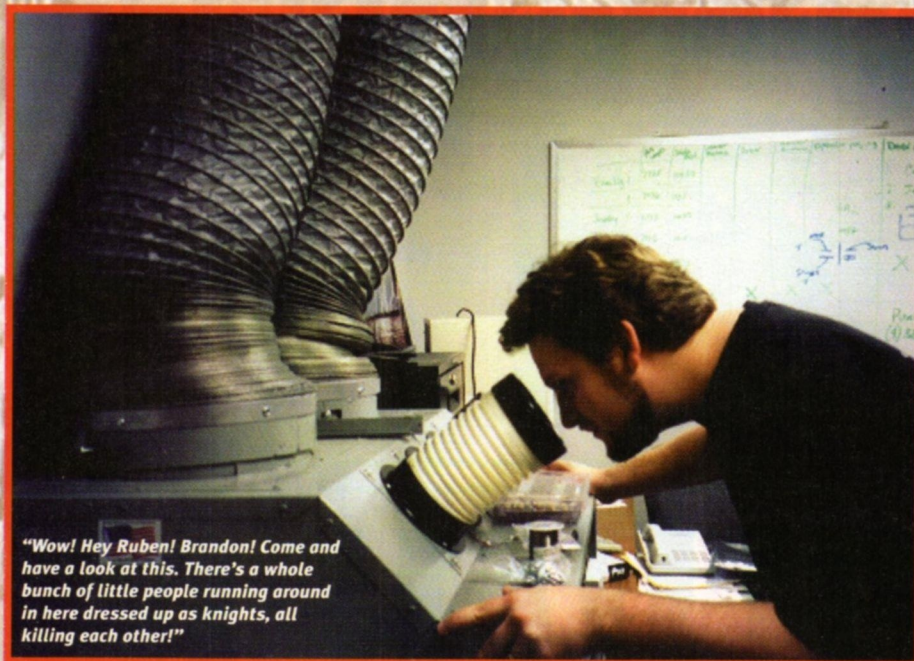
PCPP: How did you get your start in this industry?

MR: I've always been heavily interested and involved with computers. When I was younger, I was a bit of a hacker and gained a lot of knowledge about phone and computers systems during my exploits. As I matured, however, I moved on to more 'productive' computer work. While I was in college, I took some part time work at a company that printed and maintained forms for various insurance companies. My job was to use my skills at desktop publishing to input these forms into the computer. Boring! Now, while I was working there, a network was installed - I was immediately drawn to the technology. I quickly picked up the knowledge and became the "expert" at the office. I started to go to

WHERE DO GAMES COME FROM?

Games industry workers in profile, part 5.

by Brenda Garneau



"Wow! Hey Ruben! Brandon! Come and have a look at this. There's a whole bunch of little people running around in here dressed up as knights, all killing each other!"

As the siren call of on-line gaming lures players like never before, the Net Guy is on the verge of a breakthrough. Still in its infancy, only a few of the industry's big companies have explored their options to today's technical edge, and when others give it a whirl, on-line and multiplayer games could do for network geeks what 3D Studio and SVGA did for starving artists.

Even where no on-line worlds exist, you'll find at least a network engineer, as they like to be called. He or she is the person responsible for keeping the company connected internally and to the outside world. Their abilities are critical to the success of projects in devel-

behind a corporate network. We can also maintain network servers and other systems related to remote access.

PCPP: What about your current job as the network engineer for Ultima Online?

MR: Well, my current job requires a deep understanding of wide area networking, TCP/IP, UNIX, Windows NT, and Internet, Internet, Internet. On any given day, I could be troubleshooting a T3 (45Mbps WAN link), tracing down a congested router on the Internet, or working on a operating system upgrade on one of our SUN servers.

THE NET GUY MARK RIZZO

trade shows, and I read any and every magazine about networking I could. Before I knew it, I was installing e-mail and adding more servers and networking more workstations. From that job, things exploded. Suddenly, I was setting up international Frame Relay networks at a new company.

PCPP: How did you manage to land the job at Origin and on the UO Project?

MR: I was cruising the paper to see what was offered for my profession, and I came across this company called Origin Systems, a game company. They were looking for a network manager for their internal Information Systems department. I couldn't pass up the opportunity to drink beer every other Friday at company organized happy hours. My first happy hour was a carnival theme and they rented all the rides! Anyway, when UO started to move to the pre-alpha stage, they asked me for some help to set up their connection to the Internet. I was really interested in what they were doing, and I spent many hours helping them get ready for that historic pre-alpha test. When Associate Producer Starr Long decided that the team needed a part time person to help with the project, I volunteered to help interview candidates. Nowadays, we snicker at

The Stats

Name: Mark Rizzo

Age: 27

Company: Origin

Title: Ultima Online Network Engineer

Where before: Hart Graphics

Current Project: Ultima Online and Beyond

Yrs in Industry: 7

Gaming Specifically: 2 1/2

Training: Self-taught

Average week: 55 Hours

During crunch: 70+ Hours

Your job motto: Not another shard!!

The Money

According to the Software Publishers Association's most recent Salary Survey, the average salary is:

Head Tech \$48,400

Tech Support Rep. \$30,600

Surprisingly, the SPA did not have average salaries for On-line World Net Gods.

The Mind

If you know what this means, you're well on your way to becoming a network engineer. According to Mark, this is the stuff that on-line games and networks are made of:

1. Windows NT 4.0: Installation, Administration, and troubleshooting. IIS 3.0 Web Server.
2. Must be able to administer multiple UNIX operating systems. Solaris 2.x. Linux PERL, Shell script programming.
3. Strong knowledge of multiple network topologies. FDDI, Ethernet (10BaseT and 100BaseT), ATM.
4. Strong knowledge of TCP/IP.
5. Must be able to understand Internet routing policies.
6. Must have a good understanding of the TCP, ICMP, and UDP protocols.
7. Ability to configure and manage Cisco routers and switches.
8. Must be able to understand and configure Fire Wall hardware/software.
9. Must understand VPN technologies.
10. Good knowledge of Wide Area networking.
11. T1 and T3 circuits.
12. Configuration of CSU/DSU
13. Ability to use a protocol analyzer such as Network General's Sniffer.
14. Knowledge of Backup and Disk Array technologies.

ever thinking this would be a part time job. The more I got involved, the more I wanted to work on the project. So, I told Starr that I wanted the job, and he hired me.

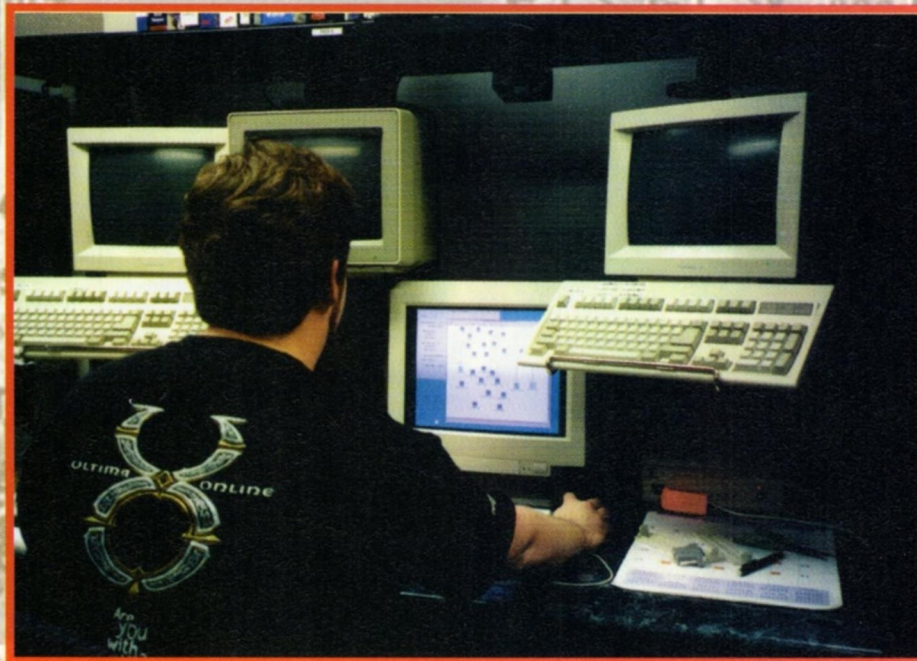
PCPP: Not specifically with UO, but with the field in general, what's the most challenging part of the job?

MR: Keeping up with the constant changes. We started this project with a plan to run one world in Austin. That world was running on Pentium Pro 200 computers using Linux, a version of UNIX. We have changed things a little since then. We now have nine worlds that are housed in many different geographic regions, and those worlds are running on equipment that is nothing like we ever dreamed. I have had to build an infrastructure to keep this game running that boggles the mind. All for a computer game! I would also like to add that keeping my wife and new baby happy through all my travels and late hours has been a pretty big challenge, too.



PCPP: I imagine, and it only got busier. When UO released, at that moment when you left Beta, what were you expecting? How did it differ from what happened?

MR: That is a good question. I don't think I really thought about Beta in that context before, probably because I didn't sleep much back then. As we approached an actual ship date, I became increasingly worried that we would not be able to handle the influx of crazed UO fans. I don't recall the exact number of worlds that we had online, but it was many less than our



(above) Mark the God-bloke watches over his playthings (left) this is Ultima Online. A microcosm of society - several thousand citizens in 4 square meters of metal & plastic



current nine. We had a plan to deploy more worlds, however, and we were able to keep ahead of the curve, but it put a strain on me and my staff. I remember a few all-nighters that ended with a long flight to California or to Virginia to complete the world installation. I was surprised to see how many of our subscribers actually played every day. Well over half!

PCPP: You're sitting down with a few friends for a Friday night beer. It's been a bad day, and you decide to tell them about it. What's a bad day like in your job?

MR: We were working furiously to install a UO world in Chicago. We built the systems in Austin and shipped them out the night before we flew there to install them. When



Mark with Ruben Cortez and Brandon Williams, members of his team.

"I think people need to be aware that this job is usually a thankless one. Unless you're running Ultima Online, people don't generally notice that you keep all of their data secure and accessible 24x7, unless they can't access it."

we arrived at the shipper to pick up our equipment, everything was there except our \$15,000 RAID drive! This was VERY bad. We had a deadline, and the shipper could not find our drive. We were able to work around the problem, and about a month later, the RAID drive mysteriously showed up in Austin. Figure that one out. Another good example of a bad day would be the Internet. I have had many bad days that were caused by some public exchange point that decided to drop 50% of all the data that is sent through it.

PCPP: Despite the problems, Mark, why would someone want to do what you're doing more than anything else?

MR: I think people choose my profession because they have a passion to learn new technology and to be challenged with different problems every day. Not a day goes by that I don't read about a new technology. I get the challenge of finding and implementing cutting-edge solutions.

PC PP: Suppose someone out there is at square one. They have a desire to do what you're doing. How do you recommend they

break into the industry? What's the best way?

MR: To succeed in this industry, you have to possess a love of all things computer. The first thing I would do is to position myself at a medium to large company that employs entry level technical support staff. Most large company IS departments hire people who have good basic computer skills. If the company is willing to let you attend network training classes, you can grow into a networking position. One word of warning, however, do not think that you can go out and spend \$10,000 on training and become an instant network engineer. Training is useful only if it is supplemented with "hands on" experience. I have seen many "paper" network engineers who might land a job, but who fall short when it comes time to solve real world problems.

PC PP: What are the biggest issues affecting the profession right now? Things people should be aware of?

MR: Currently, I can't think of any major issues with my profession. I think people need to be aware that this job is usually a thankless one. Unless you're running Ultima Online, people don't generally notice that you keep all of their data secure and accessible 24x7, unless they can't access it. I do what I do because I love to learn, and I love to make all this stuff work together.



Plane Crazy

ONLY ADRENALIN JUNKIES NEED APPLY!

PLANE CRAZY IS AN ADRENALIN-CHARGED, 3D FLYING EXPERIENCE, WHICH COMBINES THE FREEDOM OF STUNT FLYING WITH HIGH-SPEED RACING TO CREATE AN ORIGINAL CHALLENGE THAT IS A MUST FOR ALL HARD CORE GAMES PLAYERS!

The Crazy Aces are a psyched up airborne fraternity who live out their obsessions with speed and aircraft in organised races of extreme flying. Players of the game take on the role of Aces pilots, flying a series of tough courses designed to push their planes and skills to the limit.

Each race kicks off with the planes flying in a starting formation. The player takes control of a plane with the aim of passing all the race checkpoints within the specified time. The rivalry among the Aces pilots is soon apparent, with the ultimate race line and flight position crucial to achieve the best time.

There are both quick race and championship modes. When taking part in a championship, players compete in a league to win cash prizes. The money can then be used to repair, customise and improve their planes to help them achieve even better results in the races.

Plane Crazy features a choice of eight different standard aircraft which can be raced on five different courses, each with unique obstacles. Along the way, power ups and a variety of weapons can be collected to help the pilots in their efforts to reach the top!

In addition, Plane Crazy enables up to eight players to assume the role of a Crazy Ace and fly head-to-head over either a Local Area Network, a Wide Area Network or the Internet. Look for Plane Crazy in the Arcades later in 1998!

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STAFF

The low down on the latest in the genre that's the greatest - depending on your taste. Like a fine Cottee's cordial, The State of Play gives you the concentrated essence of gaming goodness you need to survive in this time of gaming revolution.

Adventure/RPG

David Wldgoose

Descent To Undermountain, then. Universally panned by magazines, both online and in print. Subject of scathing streams of invective from gamers, both in newsgroups and on Interplay's own message board. Recipient of perhaps the most staunchly negative comments for any game I've ever seen (with the possible exception of Battlecruiser 3000). Just what the hell happened?

The following refreshingly blunt message was posted on the DTU message board by the developers earlier this year:

"The game was rushed out. Interplay had given the team a certain amount of time to get the game out and we did what we could to make sure the game was as stable as pos-



sible. This doesn't justify the condition the game shipped in, but we're doing everything we can to amend the game. This is not an excuse but a honest statement to a very tough situation." A patch is also being worked on to correct, among other bugs, "physics problems" and "a LOT of AI work".

After reading this brave statement, it would be a hard person not to feel some sympathy for the DTU team. Imagine spending the best part of two years working on a game, only to have it taken from you and released prematurely. Your reputation is left in tatters and there's nothing you can do about it. I feel sorry for them, I really do. But not, of course, as sorry as I am for anyone who actually buys their game.

With increasing frequency it seems, we are being asked to purchase unfinished games. We are, if you like, paying to beta test a product. With the hope that some time in the future, after enough patches have been applied (if they're even bothered with), we might just have a fully working game.

Role-playing games seem to be suffering from this worse than most right now. Bethesda have been responsible for the Daggerfall debacle (known as Daggerfraud in some cynical quarters) and are presently repeating the same scenario with Battlespire. Origin are suffering credibility problems with the bugs and unfulfilled promises of Ultima Online. And now Interplay have given us Descent To Undermountain.

Since quality RPGs are currently so rare, I only hope that such incidents don't dissuade other companies from trying their hand at the genre.

Action

George Argy

1998 is going to be _the_ year for 3D shooters, as long as you don't ask for timeframes. Sin is beginning to look less and less like vapourware, with some flash screen shots appearing hither and thither. It's currently being migrated to the Quake II codebase from Quake I, and will boast some features that should become de rigueur pretty soon, like the ability to shoot body parts and blow bits off people. Prey is looking set to take the title as sexiest-looking game thus far. Not only are there scantily-clad women running around, the architecture looks more realistic than any 3D shooter to date.

Speaking of sexy, Paul Steed has released some shots of a female model that may or



may not be used for iD's next project, Trinity. Ex id-type John Romero's spin-off venture Ion Storm is talking the talk when it comes to Daikatana, but it's looking depressingly Hexen2-esque at this stage. There will be four eras, much like the hubs in Hexen2, with a huge variety of weapons to choose from - let's just hope they don't use the Hexen2 'tome of power' copout. The architecture looks hot, but the characters look crap. Maybe the release will have a higher poly count; after all, the Voodoo II will be out by then.

Steering away from things iD and Quake-engine related for a bit (not that there's much), the engine Monolith are developing for Blood 2 actually looks quite impressive. The shots floating around on the ether look like it will handle city streets, buildings and open areas quite well and of course, the monsters and weapons should be as interesting as the first game.

Duke Nukem: Nuclear Winter, an add-on pack for Duke 3D, should be out soon to tide people over before Duke Nukem Forever. The Half-life non-playable demo has also been seen around the traps, and it looks damn spesh. This game looks like it may re-create the atmosphere of Doom but with mutants instead of demons. See more at <http://halflife.stomped.com>.

Finally, after many years of waiting, Doom 3 is upon us. Not quite - after id released the Doom source code, a few conversions are appearing that sport higher resolutions, translucency, y-axis mlook etc. Now is truly a good time to be alive.

Strategy

Peter Sharpe

THE strategy release of 1st quarter '98 has to be Starcraft. Problem is, the soothsayers of doom are predicting a retail release somewhere in vapourware limbo between Falcon 4.0 and the Apocalypse. Fear not RTS lovers, the beta is about to wrap up at time of writing, and examining the Tarot Deck 'o vapourware, an Australian release by mid March. Of course that means if Starcraft isn't installed on your PC's by the time you are reading this, I'm out of the prediction business and it's a one way trip to Cash Converters with the Tarot cards. No talk of vapourware would be complete without mention of Lucasarts' Rebellion. Tactical battles and empire building in the Star Wars universe, if Lucasarts do it right



Rebellion will be gaming courtesy of God. If they stuff it, a million angry Star Wars groupies charged with the power of the Dark Side isn't a good look. Originally slated for a January release, we should all be researching Death Star technology by March 18th.

Disturbing news for Warhammer: Final Liberation fans. Looks as though SSI will not be putting out any expansion packs containing further WH40k races. While PowerPlay doesn't condone mass email campaigns towards companies, I'm sure we Warhammer fans can come up with something to make SSI reconsider their hopefully rash decision. Company support for games isn't totally dead, as Microprose have finally released Manalink, the Magic the Gathering multiplayer component. Head over to www.gathering.net for details on how getting a world MTG ranking is only a click away. Well a click away, and then a 70MB download, ouch! I'd bet a mint Black Lotus that this near impossible download, will soon appear on the PowerPlay cover CD. At the opposite end of the download sanity scale is the 3MB Total Annihilation 2.1 beta patch. AI opponents in multiplayer mode, sure that's a cool addition. What's not generally known is that this super patch allows for all sorts of complex freaky units that should be appearing on the Net real soon.

Something cool on the horizon: Populous 3, under-hyped but looking very tasty and should be out (cough) any minute! This will prove Bullfrog can deliver without ex-chief Peter Molyneux.

Sims

Maj. Ian Lindgren

Ahh, another year, and lots of new sims on their way to tantalize your senses and "max out" your PC! On the Main Battle Tank front we have two new exciting games entering the fray in April. Microprose are expected to release Mr Tank Platoon II. The original game was visionary in its day, and this version promises to be great, with 5 campaigns, including the Gulf War II (I wonder if that has already occurred by the time this goes to press?). Interactive Magic will also release iPanzer '44. In this game you can act as driver, gunner or tank commander in a M4A3 Sherman, German Panther, or Russian T34! Or be bold, and take command of a tank platoon or company, complete with air support, artillery, infantry,



rockets, and more. History is yours to relive or rewrite! 3Dfx support is expected.

Flight Sims, my passion! It must be close for Falcon 4; there's demos a plenty, and Microprose are telling us to expect an Autumn release. Let's hope this is for real; but I'd say July would be a good bet. Interactive Magic is releasing a Persian Gulf Mission Disk to iF22, and a new game iFr8 Carrier Strike Fighter, around mid year. Let's hope they've upgunned the graphics engine. D.I.D. also plan to release an upgrade to F22 ADF called Total Air War. This time they'll complete the job and build in a random mission generator and editor, and allow you to command the three dimensional battlefield from an F22, an AWACS or on the ground as the Theatre Commander! I hope they live up to their word!

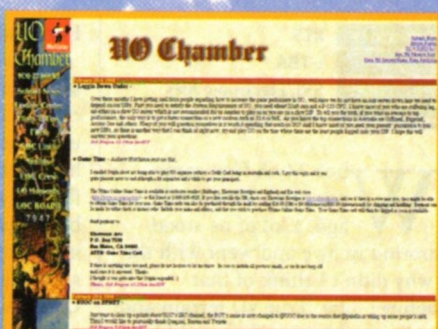
Slip back to WWII, and Eidos has put Flying Nightmares 2 on hold because game's designer and producer shot through to another company! But Activision assures us Fighter Squadron will be released in June, and Microprose confirm that European Air War will be out then too. Those of us who get their kicks from Red Baron II should be aware that a patch is available at the Sierra Web Site which adds new views and improved multiplayer functionality, and rumour has it that the graphics will be enhanced by 3Dfx support later in the year.

Finally, EA are about to release Jane's F15; so strap in and light the afterburners! Jane's always do it well.

Online

Gareth Jones

First up, and the biggie of online games, is Ultima Online. A number of interesting developments have taken place lately, both in the game and outside. Firstly, within UO, OSI (Origin Systems Incorporated) are creating a semi-feudal system of government. Rather than have Lord British (AKA Richard Garriot) attempt to govern his kingdom, the guild leader with the most support will be king until s/he is overthrown in some way. And PK'ers will be named as 'murderers', and excluded from normal social life for ever. Finally, UO is looking like it might begin to live up to its potential. But that's no good to us folk in Oz, unless we get our own server. It's still not clear whether EA have committed them-



selves to using a server for the Australian/Asian region, but it is beginning to look more likely. Multiplay (www.multiplay.com.au/uochamber) hosts a web site for a petition to get an Australian server out here...and it's kind of interesting that Multiplay would host a web page of that nature, don't you think...?

But there's always the online tank sims to keep you happy, and Tanarus is gaining a lot of popularity - especially seeing as the entire game can be downloaded from www.tanarus.com and played for one free month. But there is competition in the form of Terra - Battle for the Outland, which seems styled very much along the same lines as Tanarus. It's from a little known company called Kaon, and there hasn't been much hype for it yet but it is shaping up to be some very strong competition to Tanarus. Again, the entire game can be downloaded from www.kaon.com, and the first month is free.

But if you prefer more of a cerebral scenario, the 'net has long been a great place for PBEM games, and Ultra Corps from VR1 (www.vr1.com/sneak/ultracorp/) is a PBEM style game that's integrated into the VR1 website. Though it's still in the early testing stages it's very playable, and (best of all) very free too. If you like games such as VGA Planets, MOO2, or Stars!, then this is your kind of game for sure. Nothing to download, nothing to pay (yet), plenty of interesting backstabbing to be done, and some very nice graphics to boot. RTS be damned! This is where the real action is.

Warhammer

DARK OMEN

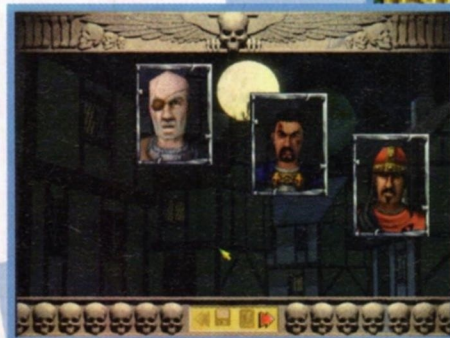
Taking the Myth-style to a new level of refinement comes Warhammer Dark Omen. Looking good and playing great too.

Category	RTS
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	SSI/Electronic Arts
Available	April/May

When Myth first came out just a little while ago, a lot of us stood around in awe and went with the 'why didn't I think of that before?' line. True 3D terrain and units, a viewpoint that could be manipulated just about any way you liked, along with some pretty decent gameplay as well. No resource management (other than managing your units so that there's some left at the end, that is), just pure warfare and battlefield tactics. Great! But it seems that as exciting and new as the concept of Myth was (at least in some ways), Bungie weren't the only ones thinking along those lines. There are a couple of other games in the works that follow the same kind of gameplay elements, and Warhammer: Dark Omen is one of them - and by the looks of it not a bad one at all.

Fast and beautiful

This would seem to be a fairly significant break from games created from the Warhammer universe - often in the past they have been turn based, almost faithful reproductions of the board game, and in truth they have often seemed to be aimed squarely at existing fans. Dark Omen is different in all these respects, the combat is real time, and though the game remains faithful to the Warhammer universe the setup is such that Dark Omen is very accessible to those who have never played the board game in their life (like me) as well as fans of the game. A 3D engine has been utilised for the terrain, which allows for zooming in and out and rotation around the battlefield, and it does look very pretty indeed. Some of the battlefields feature trickling water and waterfalls, rolling hills, shadows, and some very nice and groovy explosions too - all in 32,000 colours. To add to this, the developers will be supporting just about every 3D



card available including ATI, Power VR, Rendition, 3Dfx, Matrox, 3D Labs, NVidia, as well as support for MMX technology. For some reason however, the actual units are only sprites and even when you do zoom in as far as possible they still end up looking rather blocky and dull, and when in the midst of battle it can be very hard to tell whose troops are yours and whose are the opposition's. There are some nice effects during the battles though, such as when you attack a group of enemy soldiers with a cannon from afar, little Orc or undead people will scream, blow up and scatter all over the place - very cute and very satisfying too!



encounter allies and old friends, as well as make new enemies. It's not just

Orcish hordes!

Dark Omen features a deep and interesting plot, chock full of well developed characters, and an intriguingly menacing force which is slowly destroying the countryside. You take the part of a commander of a mercenary army, who works for anyone (well, anyone human) as long as the money is right. You begin by entering a scenario at the behest of some guy who is being terrorised by some Orcish hordes, and as you progress depending upon your success (or lack thereof) you will

a 'finish one battle, progress to the next' sort of game either; on more than a few occasions you will be presented with a set of choices - do you stay to guard a town at the behest of the mayor (with the promise of plenty of gold for your trouble), or do you move south to the forest where your old friend is under attack by some undead nasties? Obviously, the decisions you make affect the way the story-line develops, and it's nice to see this in an RTS game - it adds a lot of enjoyment to the proceedings.





Expect to see quite a few more games of this ilk - but this is going to be a good one, even if you've never heard of Warhammer before. Those after something with a more futuristic edge may want to check out Warhammer 40,000, which we reviewed (and liked) last issue

Snappy interface too

The gameplay rocks hard too. Essentially it's a fairly simple affair. At the start of each battle you set down your remaining units in a designated area, deciding on which way you want them to face, and then the battle commences. As mentioned previously, the battlefield can be viewed from any angle or depth, with each group of units being represented by a nice and large flag

which is easy to click on during the heat of battle. Scrolling around the battlefield in the heat of battle has been a bit of a problem for these types of games in the past, because it's easy to lose track of where you units are, and to get a ranged unit (Archers, Cannons, etc) to attack a group that's not on the same screen has been troublesome. Dark Omen uses a very nifty way around this problem though, when units are

off the viewable area, their flag icon sits on the edge of the screen in an approximation of their direction from your present location, and rather than having to scroll over and find that unit to attack it you can just click on the icon from the present screen to set your troops onto them - it's a great idea, it's simple and it works well. There's also a decent variety in the units on offer, ranging from cannon fodder infantry to cavalry, to cannons and archers, to magicians and plenty more too. As with Myth, one of the hardest parts to master seems to be the friendly fire problem - it's not a good idea to send in the cavalry whilst bombarding with a

cannon, though if you plan your attack properly then things will work out just fine.

All up, there's not too much left to be improved upon for the final release. Dark Omen looks to be a quality game, both for single and multi-play, with plenty of tactical planning and thought required, some very pretty graphics (save for the sprite units), and a well laid out storyline. Those that are big time fans of the Warhammer series already will probably love this, but it's not just for them - I'd never played anything remotely Warhammer-like before, but I still really enjoyed this beta.

Gareth Jones

Populous 3

THE THIRD COMING

Little people running around building things and blowing others up. The genre that evolved into the Real Time Strategy game started with Populous - now the all-new version cometh...

Category	RTS
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Bullfrog/Electronic Arts
Available	April/May

The original Populous was a hugely popular game, and sold something like 3 million copies worldwide across all the platforms - being the Amiga and the PC. It was the first popular and polished of the god sim genre, in fact, Populous is often credited with the creation of the God sim genre, which isn't too far off the mark. And truly it was pretty good fun if you were into that kind of thing, most of us just got a kick out of playing god, but the gameplay was well balanced (if a little frantic) and there was plenty to keep you occupied. The sequel, imaginatively named Populous 2, was sadly not another paradigm leap, but more of an improvement to the original, with a few more things you could do, a few new

spells, and some updated graphics. While it was still good, Populous 2 just didn't quite live up to the expectations of the many fans, and those who have remained faithful have shown a lot of enthusiasm for the third in the series, Populous 3. To say that this is eagerly anticipated would be an understatement, but the big question is whether it's going to live up to expectations or not.

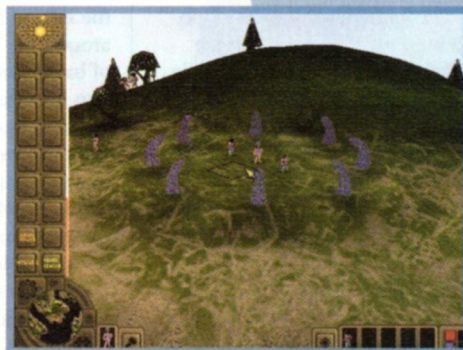
More combat

For starters, this time around Bullfrog have gone for a different look and feel to the game. A 3D engine has been used that allows for scrolling and zooming around the world, and the landscape is modelled in 3D as well, which looks rather nice and pretty, and when you scroll around the world you get a nifty 'curvature of the earth effect'. The perspective takes more of a forward facing aspect than as is the norm for

god sims, probably because this time around you aren't working your god powers so obtrusively, instead you've got a patsy on the ground in the form of your 'Shaman' (who is actually a woman..Shaperson?). Bullfrog are saying that they have completely redesigned the concept of Populous for the third in the series, and the gameplay does seem to be markedly different.



The Myth look and feel is proving to be a popular one and it's just what Populous needed





Populous goes RTS?? Well, sort of, but it's still big fun

required to tell them what buildings to build (warrior huts, balloon factories, temples and the like), they still act fairly autonomously. And the cute factor has been retained also, instead of you flattening out the land for them to build upon, your subjects will do so themselves - just tell them where to build and they'll start jumping up and down on the land to even it out - very cute. And then there's your preachers, who fulfil the dual role of keeping your other subjects loyal as well as converting the opposition subjects. Send a preacher into enemy territory and he'll gather the Braves around, sit them down in a circle around him, and start preaching to them - if the enemy Shaman or preacher doesn't come close in time then you'll have a few converts on your hands who will happily do a suicide run into the middle of the enemy's base and create some havoc or just come back to your base and start working for you.

Commander God

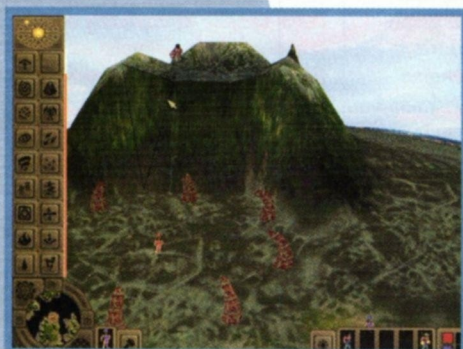
So, from what we've seen - and once again this is from the beta version - Populous 3 is an almost complete rework of the Populous theory. Bullfrog have gone for much more of an RTS feel, with your godly powers channelled through a ground based Shaman who moves around a lot like the commander in TA, but with the magical abilities of a god. I'm not so sure that it's what I was looking for in the third of this extremely good and ground breaking series, but nonetheless it does seem to work well, and the graphics are very pretty and quite cute too. Final judgement has been reserved until we get a chance to take a look at the final version however.

Gareth Jones

Whereas in Populous and Populous 2 you could, as a god, strike literally anywhere you felt like, for Populous 3 you can only channel your powers through the



Shaman, who is like your representative on the ground. To create an earthquake or a volcano for example, you have to get your Shaman within striking distance of where you want it to occur, and seeing as usually you're going to want to create havoc in the middle of an enemy village, this means moving your Shaman right into the middle of opposition territory. Obviously this has changed the way the game is played quite a bit, with much more emphasis being placed on the production of warriors and super warriors to defend your city from opposition Shaman attacks, as well as using warriors to defend your Shaman when you send her on a rampage through enemy territory.



Mana man

A quick reminder that we are looking at the Beta version, but still the gameplay seems to be very reminiscent of a Warcraft style game rather than a game from the god sim genre. Sure, when Populous and Pop2 were released there weren't any RTS games around, and it seems fairly natural that they would include something like this....but the end result is that the game feels much less like a god sim and much more like a Warcraft clone with prettier graphics. That's not necessarily a bad thing however, the gameplay still seems very nicely balanced, and much of the original ethos behind Populous still remains. To gain the mana necessary for casting spells like creating volcanoes and the like, you need to have a number of happily employed worshipful subjects filling you up with their happy thoughts, and though you are

Grimoire

RPGs are coming back with a vengeance, and an Australian company believes they have the "Gamer's Game" just around the corner. Our game gamer David Wildgoose met developer Cleve Blakemore...

Category	RPG
Players	1
Publisher	Central Dynamics
Available	April/May

"The Golden Age of Computer Roleplaying Games isn't over... it's just beginning!". This is how Central Dynamics are promoting Grimoire, their new, but very traditional, massive and massively complex role-playing game. They are a small-time group of developers passionately headed by one Cleveland Blakemore, devoted RPG fanatic, minor Usenet deity, and an American currently residing in Australia. Disillusioned with many new so-called RPGs offering uninspired tedium (Betrayal In Antara, Daggerfall) or treacherous arcade action (Diablo, Lands Of Lore 2), Grimoire harks back to a time



when RPGs were genuinely non-linear in scope and strategic and cerebral in challenge. There's even a respectful dedication to classic titles like Darklands, Ultima IV and the original Lands Of Lore, amongst others, on the credits page.

PCPP: Right then, Cleve. Grimoire - for the hard-core RPG freak. Is this a fair summary?

Cleve: "Absolutely - the first of a new wave of creative expression made possible by the potential of the Internet for spot targeting of

customers. [Grimoire is] not a mass market product, but an elite, super-high-calibre game especially tailored for people who enjoy the classic roleplaying experience."

PCPP: Indeed, RPG players may be few in number, but their appetite is legion. And, significantly, they've never been terribly swayed by boasts about graphical achievements. But hang on - Ultima Underworld proved that a true 3D engine can succeed in an RPG. So why give Grimoire a step-based engine for movement?

Cleve: "Crusaders of the Dark Savant, a Wizardry game with a step engine that was released at the same time as Ultima Underworld, outsold the Ultima true 3D game by a two-to-one margin. Crusaders had far superior atmosphere and beautiful graphics that UW simply could not compete with. The step engine reflects the style and pace desired by avid roleplaying fans far better than a polygon engine ever will."

A true 3D engine, for some reason, does seem to inevitably mean "action game" to both the makers and potential players of the game.

"It must be frustrating for the



(above right) Finally! An RPG featuring dancing skeletons. Hopefully they rap too

people who worked on Lands of Lore II that the hardcore contingency of players who made Lands of Lore I such a critical and commercial hit have already rejected the sequel out of hand despite a massive campaign by the corporate backers of Lands of Lore II to portray their change from a step engine to a polygon engine as "technical progress". I am currently playing Lands of Lore again for the thirtieth time and I am still discovering interesting things in it. I traded Lands of Lore II away within a couple of hours of purchasing it and have no regrets."

PCPP: Despite its resolutely old-school leanings, Grimoire certainly isn't shy about forging innovation in gameplay terms. Using a sophisticated text parser for NPC conversations sounds like a potentially great idea, but one that may alienate many people including some of those hard-core RPG players you are so keen to attract. Can we feel reassured that it will be superior to any menu or keyword system?





...and lions that look like they've come straight from the Mardi Gras parade...

Cleve "I've designed keyword trees before, it is fair to say that they are extraordinarily contrived and boring. It can only go to the end and you have exhausted the meagre possibilities. Our NPCs in Grimoire might respond with interesting information on as many as 1000 topics. You might play the game several times before discovering information you never knew about from an NPC you have spoken to several times before. There is no comparison between this kind of

genuine interaction with characters and the stilted mechanics of keyword trees."

PCPP What is Grimoire's most important and innovative feature?

Cleve "I keep coming back to the automatic pathwalking in the 3D, which is being seriously improved in our redesign process as we migrate to the Windows 95 platform. In the beta version the pathwalking only moves you around inside a single map in a time, but in the new global system you can literally walk across the continent on autopilot. [Yet] no matter how spectacular this feature might be,

I am most proud of the context sensitive magic spells. Although it takes a while to appreciate how different the effects can be when casting the same spell on a variety of monsters, it ends up being the coolest and most novel feature in the game."



PCPP How do you see the competition shaping up - Baldur's Gate, Might & Magic 6, Wizardry 8, etc?

Cleve "Baldur's Gate [is] another advertising campaign packing a great deal of hyperbole behind a non-event, some inexperienced wannabes at the helm and more money and resources than sense, as usual. The construction of Might & Magic 6 is being managed by a genuine seasoned games designer.

This is probably going to be a damn good game when it is finished. They are trying hard to be authentic and not knuckle under to the lowest common denominator. Wizardry 8 exists at the moment only as a wish list, the screen shots that have been released are mockups. The fact that development has been underway for a year and this is the best they have put together indicates to me that Sir-Tech is going to be permanently discredited by this fiasco when it hits the shelves. I believe Grimoire will be recognized as the dominant standard for turn-based RPGs within a year or so, after consumers have had a chance to play both games."

PCPP Looking at the state of RPGs generally, do you think Diablo made RPGs cool again? Regardless of the fact that Diablo is only an RPG in the loosest sense of the acronym, it seems to me that its success has made game publishers sit up and take notice. I'm sure we'll now see more "action-oriented" RPGs, but

this need not mean fewer serious RPGs. In fact, I tend to think the opposite will occur - any interest is healthy interest.

Cleve "Diablo was a truly superb action game. That the corporate giants were so stunned to learn RPG elements were desirable to consumers demonstrates an extremely important fact about the large companies I am competing with. Less than 3 months earlier the dominant theme amongst these cartels was that RPGs were passe and had no mass market appeal. The quick effortless turn-about on the subject paints a clear picture of them as followers, not leaders or innovators. That gives me confidence in what I am doing, because I have never doubted for the past three years that RPGs have broad and deep appeal for dedicated enthusiasts who basically determine the direction of the mainstream."

Almost finished

He should be confident, too. I've played around with an early beta copy and even in this condition it looks like Grimoire could well deliver on Cleve's not inconsiderable promises. At the time of writing, the game is undergoing a shift from Dos to Win95 (as well as a number of substantial enhancements in other areas) and Central Dynamics are negotiating with several publishers. All going well, they are hoping to have the shareware version available perhaps as early as March. Check out <http://www.grimoire.net> for more news.



Forsaken

Descent hit the gaming world while we were all obsessed with Doom. For the first time in our gaming lives, real 3D and a totally new combat environment had arrived. Apart from the many members of the Descent family, only the disappointing Terracide tried the concept again. Now the next generation of the 3D free-floating combat world is here...

Category	3D corridor shooter
Players	1-15
Publisher	Probe/Acclaim
Available	May

It's probably not really fair to say, but Forsaken looks and feels like an almost exact rip-off of Descent, the scenarios are different, but the levels look extremely similar. And that's not necessarily such a bad thing either - the quality Descent clones haven't exactly been thick on the ground of late. But whether you want to whack Forsaken with the tag of Descent clone, or be a bit kinder and call it a 3D corridor shooter, it remains looking like a very good game.

Combat Jet Bikes

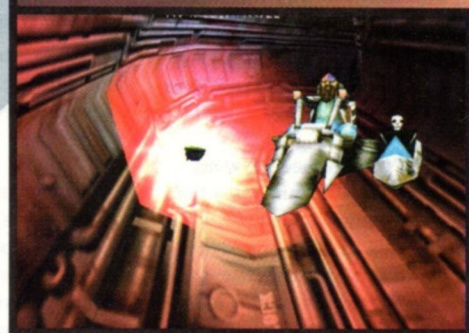
It's set sometime in the future, when the Earth has been all but destroyed through a scientific accident. But life continues on other colonised planets, and once word gets out that there's booty to be had back on Earth the scavengers all begin a desperate race to grab whatever they can before the others do. Which is where

you come in, of course, seeing as you're one of the scavengers. Rather than just have one type of pilot and bike (yes, you read right, they all ride anti-grav bikes), the developers have included around 8 pilots to choose from. Each has different abilities and each one comes with an engaging persona too. Like Beard, for example, the Sci-Fi equivalent of an outlaw biker dude who rides a chopped hog, proudly displays his colours, and is always loyal to his pals. He's so loyal to his pals that he's kept his now dead partner, Mad-Dog McCoy, in his sidecar for company, for example.

Hot biker chick

And graphically, especially if you have a 3D accelerator card, prepare for your jaw to drop until drool pools in your lap. The graphics are nothing short of spectacular, with amazingly crisp coloured lighting, almost photo-realistic walls and doors, and a level of

detail in the characters that has to be seen to be believed (just check out the pictures of the biker chick Nubia - well, if you were sitting on a bike like that your underpants would probably ride up a little too). The weapons too are awesome, and we're talking Turok style weapons and explosions to the point of overkill. It's a hoot to play deathmatch style, and one last very nice feature to mention is that the weapons, shields and power boosters that lay around the levels all respawn in random areas, so the Quake style problems of everyone running to the same point to get the RL are over. All up, Forsaken looks to be a great game, but as for the final release, we'll just have to let you know next time around.





Some of the explosions have to be seen to be believed - but Forsaken isn't just a pretty face, it's great fun to play both in single player mode, and especially in multiplayer.





Spec Ops- US Army Rangers

Category	Action simulation
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	BMG Interactive
Available	TBA

Spec Ops is looking awesome. Even in the early beta stages. The version we looked at had native 3Dfx support and had some of the effects like explosions and tracer rounds already coded in, and they looked great.

Spec Ops actually looks like more of a cerebral offering than your average frag-fest free-for-all. In fact, it is more like a first-person military simulator than any other game of the genre. For reality freaks, Spec Ops features the actual equipment and weapons of the US Rangers (sorry Quakers, no BFG). You have specific mission objectives that you must carry out to advance to the next mission, and you have to choose your ordinance and type of soldier very carefully. The version we reviewed had grenadier, machine gunner and rifleman to choose from, though more will



be added for the final release. You take 2 soldiers on each mission, and effective use of your 'wingman' is the only way to win. Oh yeah, and those hanging for a bit of stealth and real tactics will get their fill here - it's no rush in and kill everything type of affair as you're always outnumbered and outgunned.

The game also boasts a new engine that can handle outdoor terrain beautifully, with valleys, cliffs, trees (good ones, too) land-

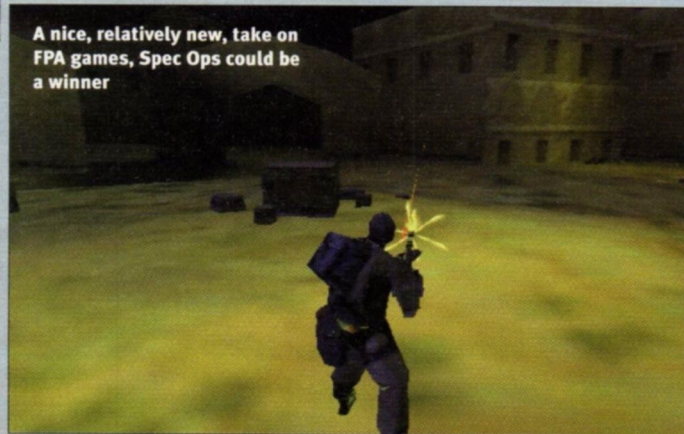


scape, buildings, vehicles and huge maps - much like a Terminator Future Shock for 1998.

The camera views that are on offer so far are Lara Croft style, 1st person view and overhead so you can cater to your tastes. No word yet on multiplayer, though it seems likely.

George Argy

A nice, relatively new, take on FPA games, Spec Ops could be a winner



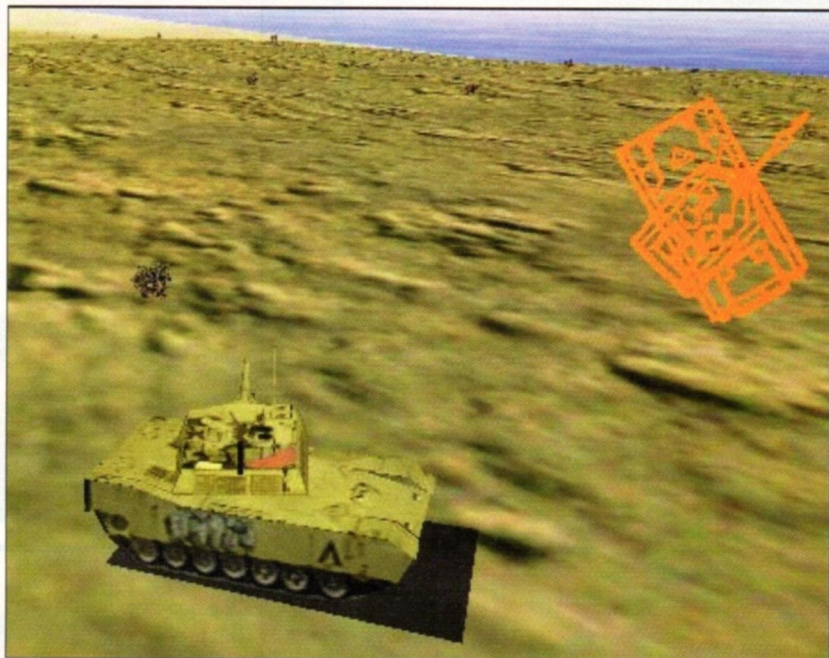
Spearhead

Category	Tank Sim
Players	1-30
Publisher	BMG Interactive/Zombie
Available	TBA

Another title BMG are bringing out soon that's being developed by Zombie (the same guys that are bringing out SpecOps, a US Rangers sim), Spearhead puts you in the hot-seat of an Abrams M1A2 tank doing battle against those zany Libyans - and isn't that hoary old 'war against the maniacal Arab nations' scenario going to be a resurgent theme now that the Pres is trying to deflect attention away from his nether regions...

Unfortunately, we couldn't get 3DFX working with the beta version we were supplied, which is a real pity because the promo shots look hot! The game will also support PowerVR and Rendition chipsets in the final release. The mission structure looks to be more than adequate, with a total of 50 single player

missions, including a surprisingly arcadey secret mission in Tianamin Square (though it isn't clear what you'll be doing there, let's hope it isn't going to be a 'run over the protestors' kind of thing). Also, the multiplayer setup hasn't been ignored, with an optimised networking configuration for the often unre-



dictable net environment. But don't think that this will be just an online Tokyo Wars - Zombie also develop high-end simulations for military use, and Spearhead will be no exception. It will boast real US Armoured Cavalry

Yes, it's yet another tank sim, but it looks pretty damn good. Oh, how pretty machines of mass destruction can look when given the 3Dfx treatment

missions, realistic controls and actual Abrams sound effects. Looks like Armoured Fist 2 and M1 Abrams are going to face some stiff competition in the tank sim arena.

George Argy



Pilgrim

Faith as a weapon

1208 AD.

An age full of heresy, crusades and knights-errant. Marc, a renegade Templar, has brought back an old Coptic manuscript which is supposed to be the lost Gospel according to St. John.

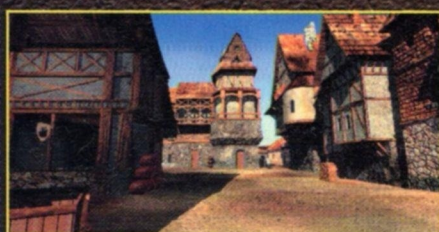
In the troubled Languedoc region, Marc falls into an ambush. Seriously wounded, he reaches a small hamlet and gives the manuscript to Adalard de Lancrois, the leader of a secret order called "the Tradition".



Shortly after, Adalard falls ill and asks, on his death bed, his younger son, Simon, to carry the manuscript to his friend Petrus who lives in Toulouse.

Meanwhile, the Pope Innocent III sends the inquisitor Diego d'Osma on the track of the precious document in order to remove it from the heretic hands.

A dangerous countdown begins for Simon and Petrus...



Scenario by
Paulo Coelho



Design & characters by
Moebius



Sega·Ozisoft





Army Men

Category	RTS
Players	1-4 (modm, IPX, TCP/IP)
Publisher	3DO
Available	April-ish '98

Oh come on, admit it. When you were a kiddie you had a set or two of plastic army men and you pretended to fight with them in your bedroom, the lounge, or outside in the backyard. You chewed, mauled, mutilated, burnt and generally ripped apart the little guys until it was time to whinge at mum to go buy some more, and then started all over again. There's nothing wrong with that at all. I did it, and I've fully come to terms with the past. I can deal with the fact that I got a can of hairspray and a lighter from my sister and used

It's one of those great ideas that hits you in the face and makes you think "why didn't I think of that?" Let's hope they include the massive juggernaut that is the Toy-chewing-family-dog-of-death unit



realistic depiction of blood and guts would result in the game being banned in some countries (like Germany, Australia and New Zealand).

So they decided to go

it on a line of infantry to emulate the effects of a napalm attack, and I can deal with the fact that when my best friend from childhood came over to play with his men against mine that I always cheated by hiding his men under my doona when he wasn't looking (sorry Marcus). But now those evil people from 3DO are forcing me to confront my wild and reckless past, the bastards, and I'm loving it already.

Gory Toy Story

Army Men is, as you might have guessed, a game where you control your little green or tan plastic men, instead this time around you won't have to pretend that the men are moving (and you won't have to perform those embarrassing sound effects yourself either, which is a blessing). The game actually came about almost by accident though, the developers were worried that any vaguely

for a pretend plastic look, and at this point some came up with the idea of going all the way - of making a game modelled on the plastic toy soldiers of our youth. So you can expect a game where soldiers melt as the result of a flamethrower attack; where instead of blowing up into a grisly stew of blood, faeces, and bones, units will explode into a mess of plastic arms, torsos, and legs; where the trucks don't explode as such, but their cheap one piece

axles fall off (remember that?). Kind of like Toy Story as directed by Sam Peckinpah, and if that doesn't get your attention, then there's something wrong with you.

Macro management

In terms of gameplay, you're not taking the part of your



army's 'God', and you don't control every aspect of each troops movement and commands (as with C&C, Warcraft, etc). Instead you're their commander, and the emphasis is upon tactical placement of your units, who will then act fairly autonomously, though you will be able to issue general commands like

'attack', 'retreat', 'hold position', and so on. You, as 'the Sarge' will also be taking part in the battle itself, driving around in a vehicle and blowing up whatever you can. It will all be real time, and 3DO are promising a lot of versatility in the interface and engine itself, along with all the usual multiplayer options. Army Men

looks like a big time fun game, it's a great idea, and unless something terrible happens in the gameplay department this is going to be buckets of fun to play. We'll keep you posted.

Gareth Jones



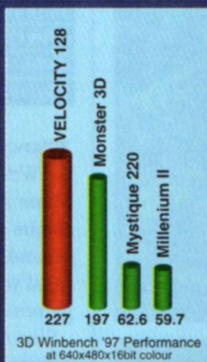
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Hardball 6

Category Sports Sim

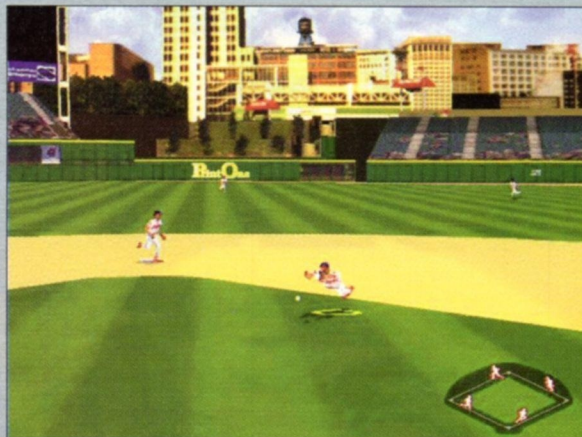
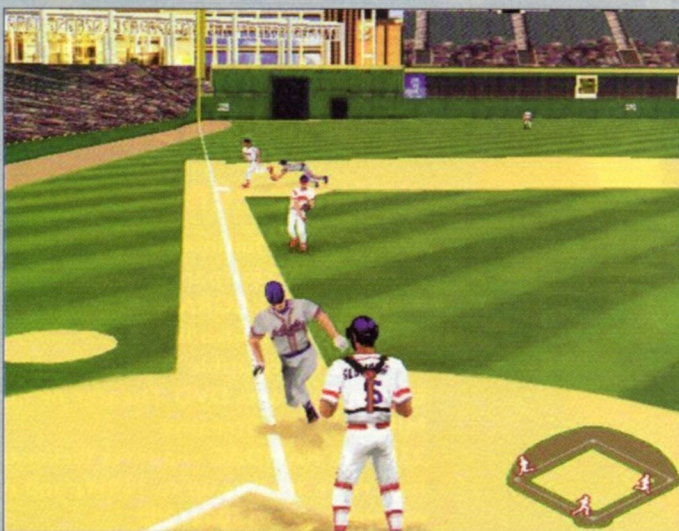
Players TBA

Publisher Accolade

Available June

Wow, have we reached 6 already? I remember playing this game on the Commodore 64, well I think I do. I guess we must forgive those

good old yanks. If we can have lots of soccer games then why not Baseball? The real surprise is it comes so soon after 5, so surely they can't have added more exciting features. We're told that if you look



More stats, more stadiums and more endorsements. Just what baseball sims need

son play allowing the players to age, deteriorate and retire from year to year. Now that's a cool feature. Imagine, Pele playing until he was 60! With a rewritten 3D engine, there's slicker unlimited camera views all within a 3D world.

Loads of stadia, the ability to create a player function, plus official endorsement from the two leading US baseball associations. You can even draft in players from the college ranks, watch them improve and unleash a team you worked on yourself



at the crowd, you can see a new brand of peanuts being chomped away by some rather large people.

As you would expect, Team Accolade have added more stats, information and consecutive sea-

in the major league.

Bigger, better, faster - a game that combines sim with arcade to give you all the thrills - be it action or cerebral! Coming to the south Pacific in June.



Sim Safari

Category God sim

Players 1

Publisher EA/Maxis

Available April

Fancy a rumble in the Jungle? Well there is no stopping Maxis as their ever increasing catalogue of sim environments expands at an alarming rate. Some say if you chuck enough sim games out there some will stick.

Sim Africa has some fancy specs and will allow the player to create their own African wildlife refuge. The player chooses which animals and exotic plants they want in their very own safari park and they must then balance the Eco system. Sounds ok, so far. Balancing the food chain and dealing with natural disasters all comes in a day's work and you are even called upon to manage a Safari camp busi-

ness with assistance from neighbouring villages.

Quite a novel slant. Tap in loads of weather conditions, menus galore with stats and details of plants and creatures, you could end up being a rather clever botanist! Learn and play at once, now that's novel.

Close up animations of real looking animals and a complex and intuitive menu select, run and play screen should get you into this game quickly.

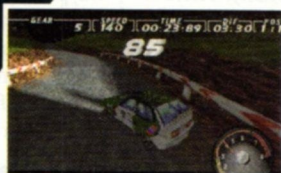
The first hands on, business package revolving around the desolate plains of Africa looks quite a nice sideways step and is coming your way around April!

Let's go Sim Safari, evreybody Sim Safari, come on a safari with me



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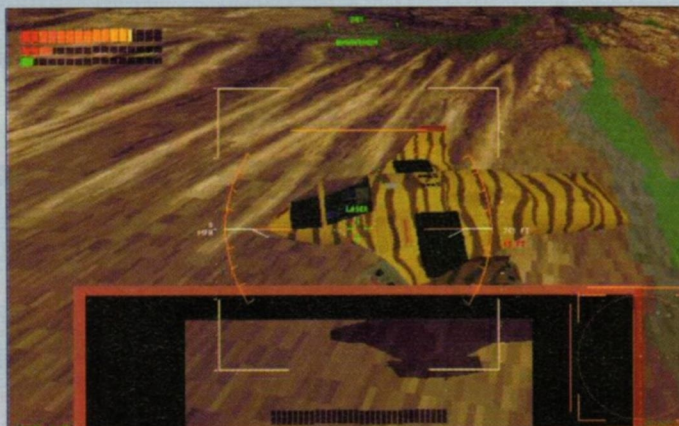


Hardware

Category	Space shooter/trader
Players	1-8
Publisher	Gremlin/Interplay
Available	2nd Quarter 98

Elite. The grand daddy of space trading/combat sims. True open-ended gameplay, a fantastically balanced set of scenarios, and enough to keep you playing for months and months. It was, and sadly still is, the best that ever has been for the genre. Sad because it's been over ten years since the initial release and nothing has topped it (the less said about the 'sequels' the better).

But there is another contender on the horizon, and it's looking pretty damn good. You're a free agent marooned on a dying planet littered with the scum of the universe, who are all too ready to take you out if they think it will benefit them. Your overall goal is to get off the planet, but that's going to require heaps of money for a hyperspace capable ship, and



money is something you 'aint got. So, you can take jobs from any of the factions on the planet, and as they begin to trust you

more you will be offered more difficult and dangerous missions, with suitable recompense. Also, you'll be able to trade for



Pretty graphics, a huge city to play around in, and open-ended gameplay. We're very excited!

goods to raise funds, become a pirate and take out freighters, stealing their cargo and selling it, or you can take jobs protecting cargo, and so on. Gameplay will only focus on one city, but it's going to be a huge one, and we're promised truly open gameplay for long term playability too. And apart from this, the graphics look very nice indeed, it will be multiplayerable (with up to 8 people), there will be five different craft to choose from, and a host of weaponry to outfit your craft with, depending upon your playing style and the funds you have available. Hopefully, Hardware is going to live up to its promise, because if it does, it's going to be a very popular game around here.

Monster Truck Madness 2

Category	Monster truck racing
Players	1-8
Publisher	Microsoft
Available	Mid '98

Why are Americans so impressed with the chassis of pickup trucks kitted out with insanely huge tires and

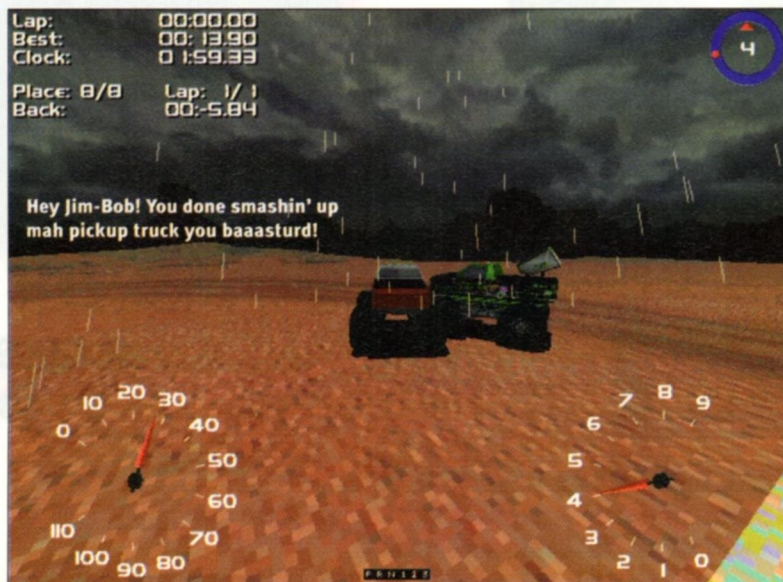
motors big enough to power a 747? I mean, it's all well and good to see one run over a bunch of normal cars, crushing and smashing them into scrap metal, but what's the point, really? Well, whatever the point of them is, Monster Trucks themselves look very silly, handle very

badly, and due to the centre of balance being so high they tip over very, very easily. It's obviously the perfect vehicle to make a racing game about!

But as silly as the premise is, Monster Truck Madness 2 seems like it might be quite a fun game. It's not a serious sim by any means, but good, fast paced arcade style action, and there's nothing wrong with a bit of that occasionally. There's a decent variety of tracks on offer, as well as a few different trucks to choose from. All the trucks seem to handle the same though, apart from a very limited 'garage' section, where you can choose between hard, medium, or soft for the tires, and shallow, medium, or deep for the cut of the tires (though of course

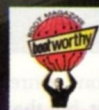


this may change for the final release). Apart from that, you just load up a track and start racing. Well, racing in a sense anyway. The tracks encourage you to cheat you see, rarely will you have to spend any length of time on the actual road - most of the time you'll be just taking the shortest route from waypoint to waypoint. Still, it looks pretty, and the gameplay is fast and engrossing, at least for a while. Nothing ground breaking or fantastic, but for what it is, MTM2 might be a decent game.



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Dominion

Category	C&C Clone
Players	1-? (TCP/IP, LAN, modem)
Publisher	Ion Storm / Eidos
Available	Third Quarter '98

Even the most die-hard real time strategy fans are starting to get worn out. Sure, Total Annihilation is still an obsession (Ashton Mills you accursed fiend, revenge shall be mine!) but Powerplay HQ is littered with a minefield of cruddy C&C clones that are destined for our Bookcase of Eternal Despair. In this mood of pessimism comes an RTS game from John Romero's Ion Storm development team. It's just possible that a guy who was partially responsible for Quake and digitally impaled his own head on a stake in Doom II can hopefully inspire a different slant on the



C&C clone genre. We wanted to review it, but the beta copy sent to us burped, farted and crashed a wee too many times for the full Powerplay review treatment. We did manage however to tinker with the game long enough so as to get a feel for how the basics of Dominion work.

The story is the usual stuff. Remote planet that holds a powerful secret, last to invade is a weakling pacifist. Introducing the four war monger protagonists; The fierce guns-a-plenty Darken, the numerous Scorp and the cunning Mercs. Oh yes, what intergalactic gun fest would be complete without we Humans. Unlike Starcraft which puts maximum emphasis on completely different sides, Dominion's races share basically the same sort of units and build-

ings, although progressing up the tech tree does introduce greater diversity in weaponry beyond the standard grunt troops, such as the differing uses of teleportation technology and Mech units. Yes the Mechs are back, complete with scenes of lovely two legged giant robots trampling helpless infantry underfoot. Seeing little men getting crushed seems to be a bit of a theme in Dominion, be it with Mechs, tanks or even the odd giant reptile. We didn't actually see a dinosaur roaming about, but evidence such as an FMV scene showing a slightly scared soldier being eaten alive, plus a mission including the investigation of "large" indigenous life forms suggest battling with environmental monsters is on the agenda. Hooray! We haven't see



Ion Storm have an excellent reputation for a company with no finished games... but is all that about to change?

the likes of this sort of thing since the good old days of Sand Worms way back in Dune 2.

While the graphics are pretty nice, with multiple resolutions up to 1280x1024 and some damn fine looking units all animated at 30+ frames a second we're not getting too excited over Dominion just yet. Thanks to TA's brill use of 3D landscapes and true LOS, Dominion's bog standard but nevertheless attractive 2D terrain doesn't grab us by the short and curlies. The game-play could do with a bit of freshening up as well considering it's the usual plonk the harvester down, build the power station,

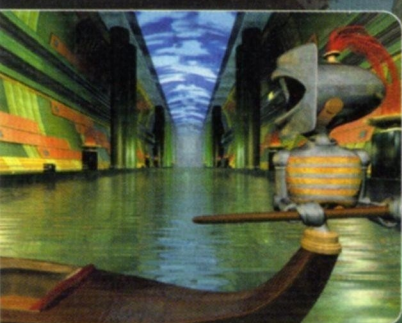
construct the factory etc. Combat contains some interesting quirks though, like being able to order troops to kneel down and crawl forward to help avoid incoming fire. There's potential for Dominion, but the true frantic mouse clicking test will have to wait until the final greatly more polished version lands on

our doorstep. Stay tuned RTS fans, the wild ride of late isn't over yet.

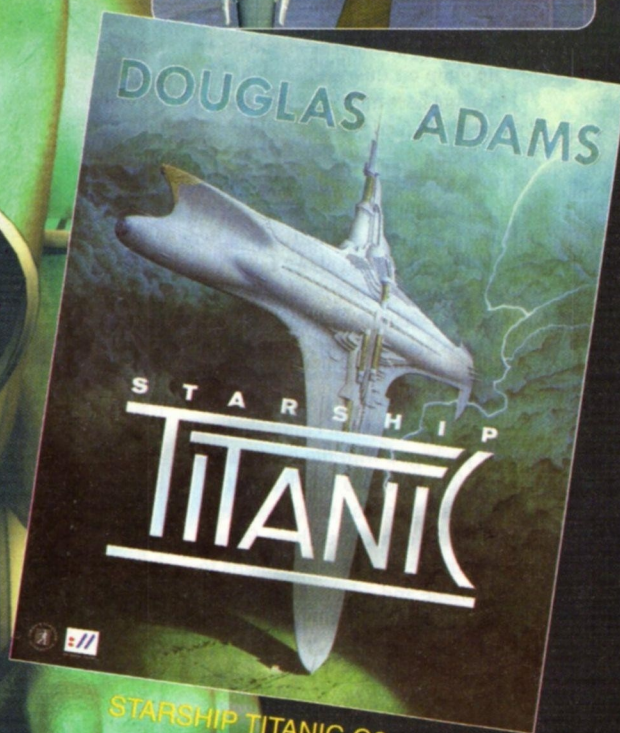
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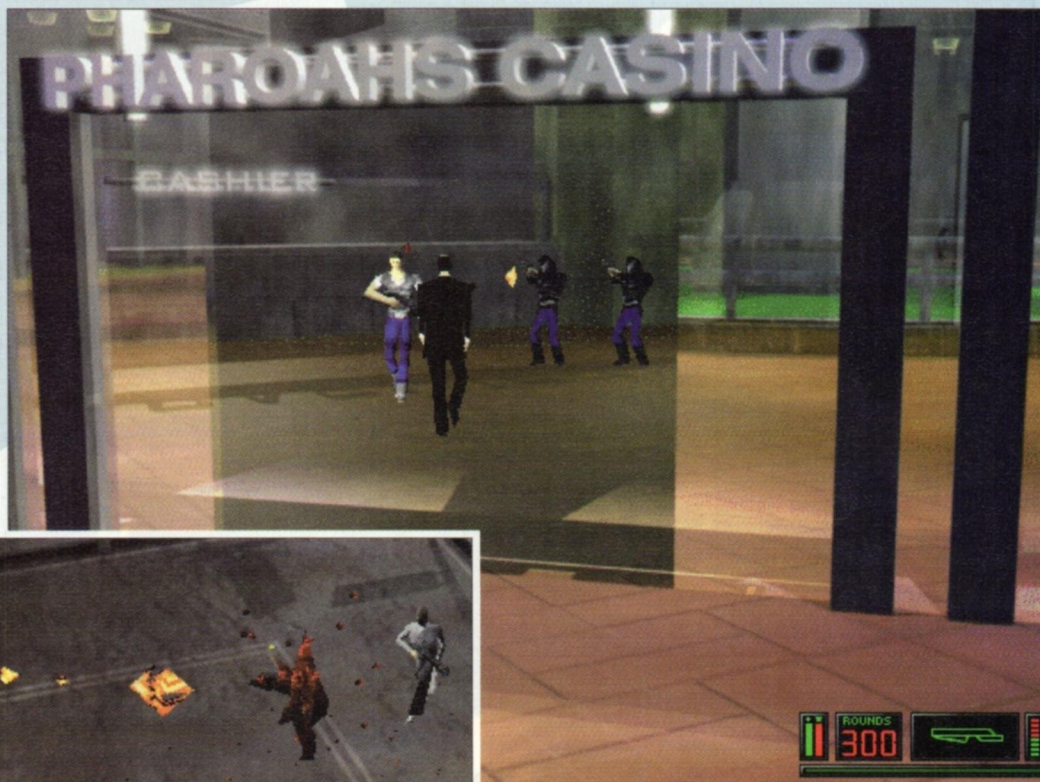


Escape from Cerberus

Category	Action
Players	TBA
Publisher	Electronic Arts
Available	Mid '98

It warms the cockles of your heart to see a young Australian guy doing well, and Ben Powell is one such guy. He's gone ahead and created his own game, working for his own start-up company - and it's a pretty impressive game too. Owing a large debt to *Syndicate Wars*, *Escape from Cerberus* places you in the midst of three warring factions, all battling for control of the planet Cerberus. To get by you accept missions from the three factions, which grow in difficulty level and remunerative capacities as time goes by. But it's not a linear progression - you will be able to pick and choose which missions to take, ensuring that there will be plenty of variety each time you replay the game.

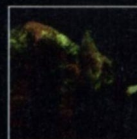
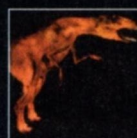
The story quite impressive too; you take the role of either a female assassin or a prison guard that has crash landed on the planet when a prison ship carrying three extremely dangerous criminals runs into mysterious difficulties. The three criminals escape from the ship and set up shop on the planet below, all quickly becoming the leaders of the three factions you will be working for. The alpha version we took a look at was impressive, with fluidly animated characters, and a dynamically shifting camera that followed you about from above and behind (which actually worked well). And that's not where the good stuff ends either - Ben has created a very sophisticated and powerful map/mission/unit editor that will be packaged with the game, allowing for players to muck about with the game as much as they like - the capacity is there for a multitude of total conversions to be made and released online, both from the developers and the players themselves. It's all rather cool, and with the backing of EA behind him, Ben should be able to complete the game to a high degree of professionalism. We'll keep you posted as to how it's turning out.



(left) the map editor - now de-riguer for most games, and this one is a good one (above) not all the textures have been done for the figures, but the animation is excellent

JURASSIC WAR

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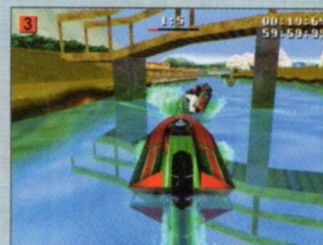
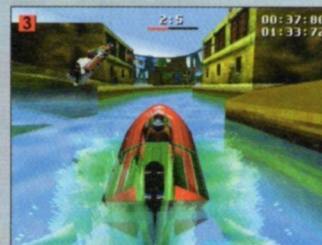
Powerboat Racing

Category	Arcade boat racing
Players	1-8
Publisher	Interplay/VR Sports
Available	April/May '98

This is one that's been in the works for a fairly long time, especially since the developers, Promethean Designs, in conjunction with Interplay decided to hold the game back for as long as it took to get it right. The original release date was set for late last year, but thankfully those concerned resisted the urge to get the game out for the Christmas period to try and cash in on the spending spree.

In truth, Powerboat Racing was a crap game then, and even now it's not looking all that spectacularly good. Powerboat Racing is, as you might expect, a game where you race powerboats around a water track, and for what is an console-y arcade style game it isn't all that bad, and graphically speaking the screen-shots look pretty special, with some lovely transparency effects

on the water. We've had a look at a playable demo version of the game, but haven't been able to get the 3Dfx version working, and in software mode it doesn't actually look all that good. But it was smooth, if a little simplistic. The final version will feature three different types of boats, and a whole host of tracks as well as a variety of ways to play (championship, arcade mode, time trials, etc). Even with the substantial delay in release date, it's still too early to say how well this one is going to turn out, but the indications are that it easily could turn out to be quite good. Maybe.



Hopefully the developers will include a Darling Harbour level, where you can splash all those annoying tourists and casino security guards

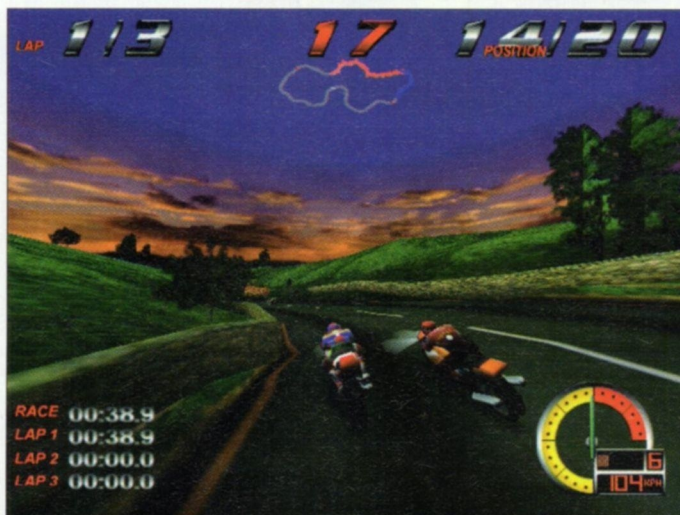
Redline Racer

Category	Motorbike racing
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Criterion Studios/Ubisoft
Available	April '98

Moto Racer set the high water level for arcade style motorbike racing, and up until then there just hadn't really been anything around of that ilk. Possibly due in part to its success, there are more than a couple of motor racing games in the works, and the prettiest one we've seen so far has to be Redline Racer. If you thought Moto Racers graphics were impressive, wait until you cop a load of this in action - we're talking about 640 x 480 in high res mode running at 60fps (well, that's the 3Dfx version anyway), silky smooth with simply gorgeous scenery.

But as we all know, jaw dropping graphics do not a good game make, and at this stage Redline Racer isn't quite pushing the envelope in terms of fantastic gameplay, which is more than a little disappointing. However, we

OK, so they've got the graphic look of the game just about right - now can we have some gameplay please?



are previewing this off a fairly early beta of the game, and the press release does make mention of the fact that the AI opponents will be improved substantially, among other things. And then there's the controls, which are nothing to write home about either, even though RR is designed as an arcade style game we don't think it's too much to ask for there to be at least some level of realism in the control and handling of the bikes. But it does look incredibly pretty, runs very smoothly (provided your system has enough grunt and a 3Dfx card), and provided that Criterion Studios, the developers, tidy up the gameplay and AI capabilities we might be looking at a hugely impressive and entertaining game.

Colin McRae Rally

Category	Rally driving
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Codemasters
Available	3rd quarter 1998

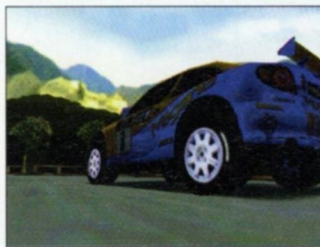
CodeMasters last release TOCA was one of the surprise hits at the end of 97. With the company on a roll, they are presently working on TOCA 2, as well as Colin McRae Rally. There are a team of 27 people working on CMR and the bottom line is Gameplay. Yes it is another racing game but is looked upon as a totally different driving experience. The cars handling, the courses and the whole experience is fresh.

CMR is a new game with new code and AI. Toca was a racing game against other cars on a track, whilst in Rally you are competing with a single car in various stages, so it is you against the elements with your time taken into account - so it is not a racing game in the strictest sense. The design for the game was from scratch and story-

boarding and ensuring all aspects of Rally is ported in an authentic way is the primary goal of the team. Coding the game right and getting the AI has been one of the prime focuses for the team and they have created a number of editors which can recreate the tracks. Although AI is essential it is the player's driving skills that are the primary slant.

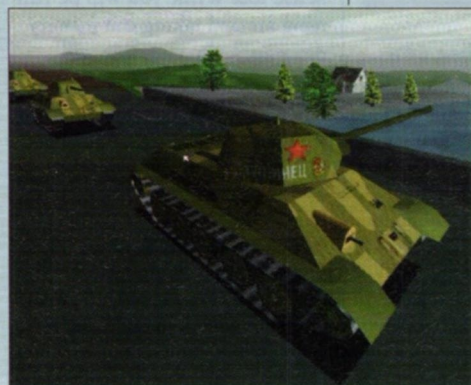
Researching the game has been focused on some of the team going in a rally car on various circuits and experiencing it live, this is where they get feed back on inertia and the way the car responds with different surfaces, etc. As far as reference material pertaining to the cars and circuits is concerned the team have loads of info supplied by Colin himself along with books and videos.

Rally driving is fun, and if it's done well, can be a great game. TOCA off-road? Hell yeah!



Tanks are cool (especially the ones above and below) and would be perfect for the PowerPlay staff car

Category	Tank combat sim
Players	1-8
Publisher	Mindscape
Available	June/July



A slight change in direction from SSI. Although this is a real time strategy game, the word strategy can be used loosely because what you have in effect is a very polished tank simulation but with all the tactics of war. The whole world, including the tanks,

Panzer Commander

utilises an impressive 3D engine and everything is set within a 3D world. You will not see little blips for tanks but full 3D models and all the perspective you would expect if you were driving either a Russian, German, American or British tank will be on view. The standard letterbox view as well as many outside camera angles are on offer and whether you want to control a single tank or a set number where you can skip from one to another, is a decision you can make. If you are in a tank and it is blown up you can quickly move to another one and at present it is believed that 5 tanks will be under your command.

The emphasis in Panzer Commander is to create an immersive feel and look - recreating battles from the World War II. Although, when within the tank, things look basic, this merely recreates the authentic feel of how it was. It is only when you start to view the outside terrain, the massive landscapes that you will move across do you notice the real detail. The

terrains themselves are impressive, with large mud masses, some with rocks and boulders and when you start to move the tanks across them you can sense the true physics that have gone into the AI and 3D engine. The tank undulates and gyrates as you move across bumpy land, even to the point of being able to run over enemy soldiers. Although this might appear quite gory, it is all true to life!

At present, as things are in their early development, there is no air support but the producer believes there will be ground/soldier support to aid you. Along with MicroProses' MIA2 Tank Platoon, things are looking healthier than they have for a while for tank fans.





Sentinel Returns

Category	Surreal VR game
Players	1-TBA
Publisher	Psygnosis
Available	2nd Quarter '98

We've said it before, but there was something special about so many C64 games - Elite, Paratrooper, M.U.L.E., Mercenary, Way of the Exploding Fist, and plenty more too, including a rather strange game called Sentinel. It probably wasn't the first 'virtual reality' game ever made or released, but it was the first game of that ilk that really worked well - truly a legendary game. The premise was great, and pre-dated many 'cyberpunk' themed games, books, and ideas by a fairly long way. It was focused upon an internal battle between your 'id' and an impersonal machine through a landscape which was almost certainly your mind - the battle was for domination of your thoughts and feelings, the battle between the machine and yourself for control of your persona, which

is still a hot topic today in wanky academic circles. Even for a 12 year old though, it was pretty intriguing stuff at the time, and the sequel will be retaining the cool surreal feel of the original, though the graph-



ics will be significantly upgraded, natch.

It's still early days in the development process, but already the graphics are looking impressive, and the developers will be taking advantage of the 3D capabilities of modern PC's (though it is



unclear as to whether support for accelerator cards will be implemented, or necessary). In terms of gameplay, there will be four 'themed play environments'; Earth, Fire, Water, and Void, and the ambient aura looks like it will be retained as well, with a music score from John Carpenter (from the Halloween movies), and a 3D 'Q-sound' system for surround sound too. I can't quite remember whether

the original was multiplayable, but this version will be, and all up it's looking quite special. Ah.... meeeemorieeee, like the cooorners of my mind...



Trespasser: Jurassic Park

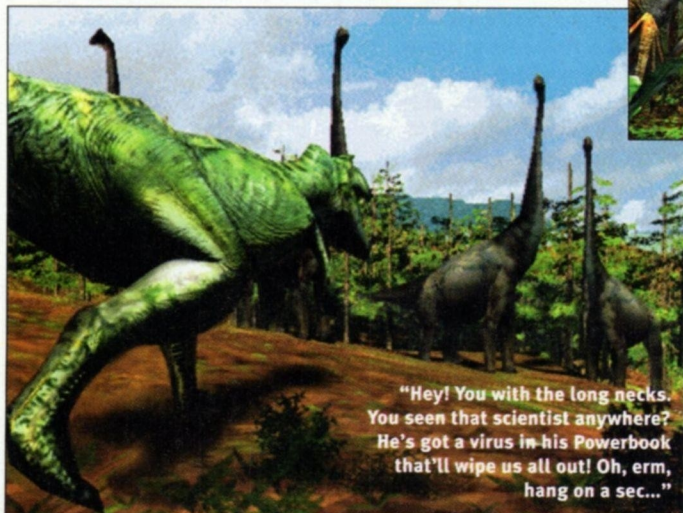
Category	Action/Strategy
Players	TBA
Publisher	Dreamworks
Available	2nd Quarter '98

For a movie series like Jurassic Park, which was so reliant upon computer generated graphics, the shift to a computer game would seem to be an easy one, and considering the money and

talent available at Spielberg's Dreamworks Interactive Studios, then expectations would have to be fairly high for Trespasser - and with some good reason too.

It's a first person action game set in the Jurassic Park 'universe' that at first glance would seem to be a bit of a Quake clone, but upon closer

inspection Trespasser looks like a very interesting hybridised concept for a game indeed. Rather than use a modified engine from one of the existing FPA games,



the team has created their own proprietary engine, and are creating a slower paced and scary atmosphere - one major influence for them was the legendary Aliens Doom TC, chock full of scary and startling ambient sounds and a genuine feeling of trepidation as you turned corners. Also, they are going for a much more realistic feel - rather than have weaponry and ammo



floating around for no good reason at all, players will have to seek out storehouses, and even then they will only be able to carry a limited amount of weaponry, and the weapons will be as realistic as possible too, so a pistol will only be useful up close, while a sniper rifle will take longer to aim but will pack more of a punch over long distances, and so on.

The storyline will actually make sense too! While you will be running around taking out hungry dinosaurs, the storyline will evolve through a narrative sequence, where you will discover new things about your environment and goals. It's only going to be a single player game, but taking into account Dreamworks Interactive's previous commitment to quality and the interesting new ideas for the genre, this is definitely one to keep an eye out for.

LODE RUNNER 2

Category	3D Platformer
Players	1
Publisher	GT Interactive
Available	2nd Quarter 1998



Lode Runner is one of those games that just keeps popping up every couple of years, all new and revamped and cool again. It was, and usually still is, a fun game to play, and the playability and addictive qualities have largely been retained through its many incarnations since the first release on the Apple II. This latest incarnation of Lode Runner still follows the same basic precepts, albeit in 3D, and from an isometric perspective. The graphics look as though they will be great, and as long as the gameplay isn't left out as a result, this will be another in a long line of frighteningly addictive Lode Runner games.

FLESH FEAST

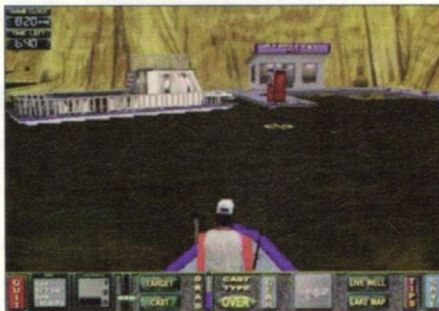
Category	Action Zombie Killer
Players	TBA
Publisher	Segasoft
Available	2nd quarter '98



Segasoft are developing a fleshy action game that owes a large debt to George A. Romero's 'Dawn of the Dead' series and a host of other zombie movies. There isn't that much information available at the moment, but you will be able to control 4 players at the same time from an isometric perspective (a'la Syndicate Wars), and the aim will be to find out why the zombies have so mysteriously woken up from their slumber, as well as to put them back to sleep with a huge variety of interesting weapons, in extremely gory ways (like chopping their heads off with a chainsaw, for instance). Aimed at a mature audience, Flesh Feast might be a gratuitous blood and brain soaked schlock fest - and that's the kind of thing that appeals to us for sure!

BASS MASTERS CLASSIC

Category	Fishing Sim
Players	1
Publisher	THQ
Available	2nd Quarter 1998



One of the most confusing new genres to have emerged over the past couple of years has been the fishing simulation. It all seems a little silly, but the popularity of these games says that there are plenty of people with an interest, and if you're one of those people then Bass Master Classic might just be the best there is. You'll be testing your skills on faithfully recreated simulated lakes where actual Bass Master tournaments take place, there's 20 minutes of FMV footage from someone called Roland Martin explaining 'tips and techniques', all the official name brand equipment, as well as multiplayer modes for, er, 'deathmatch fishing'. Sounds almost as exciting as fishing for real, doesn't it? Gosh, can't wait for this one.

WAR GAMES

Category	RTS
Players	TBA
Publisher	MGM Interactive
Available	Mid 1998



They didn't learn. You'd think that those in power would have taken the necessary steps to endure that Matthew Broderick wouldn't make a return appearance to save the world, seeing as how annoyingly cute he is, but no. They've just gone and revamped WOPR, but a group of hackers have broken into the system again and started a full scale war. Your task is to wage war against the machine by utilising the now standard RTS interface along with sending in teams of hackers to special points to upload virii into WOPR in an effort to slow it down. Another real time strategy game, yes indeed, but as long as there's no FMV of the Broderick, it might just be a good one.

MILLENNIUM 4

Category	Space Combat Sim
Players	TBA
Publisher	5D Games
Available	3rd QTR



Millennium 4 is billed as a space warfare/trading/adventure game, where you are a pilot in the midst of a huge human war, and you have the choice of joining one of the two warring factions or just to stay neutral and concentrate on trading and perhaps a bit of mercenary work on the side. The storyline won't be fixed, instead it will develop according to the choices you make, and there will be many multiplayer scenarios as well, with support for up to 32 player death-matches or co-operative games. Graphically, (are you ready for this?), expect 1280 x 1024 resolutions in 24-bit colours, with support for a host of 3D accelerators. We're excited about this one, and you should be too - we'll keep you informed as to how the game is developing in future issues.

HEXEN 2 -Portal of Praevus

Category	Action/strategy
Players	TBA
Publisher	Activision
Available	Mid '98



Hexen 2 was one of those eagerly anticipated games that never really seemed to take off in the marketplace. The game looked great, and the playability was high, but a level design too torturous for many got in the way of the tag 'smash-hit' being applied. It's still a relatively popular game, and Activision's mission pack should keep the fans happy for a while yet. Details of just what the game features are scarce at the moment, but the 'hub' aspect has been retained, with the first hub having just been announced as having a Tibetan feel to it. We'll do a full preview once we get some more information though



[illegible]

PCPP # 23 April

A Wet patch in the Seasonal Drought

It's that sad'n'surreal time of the gaming year again, just after the Christmas rush, just before the mid-year bonanza. All the elves are working hard on the next bunch of games, and in the meantime we've got an odd hotch-potch of games to tide us over - some brilliant, others depressingly awful.

Heading the list of awfuls are C&C Sole Survivor and Sega Touring Cars. Westwood's desire to milk the C&C license for all it's worth is a sad swing from the once sterling reputation they held. It's now become embarrassing - even the most naive gamer wouldn't fall for their transparent marketing ploys. What they've done - or more to the point, haven't done, with C&C, together with the disappointing Lands of Lore 2, show that Westwood fully expect to rest comfortably on their laurels. How the mighty are falling...

Meanwhile Sega continue to demonstrate their almost quaint lack of understanding of the PC games scene. Each and every one of their Saturn to PC ports has been woeful in every respect. A recent press release from Sega announced excitedly that by the end of the year their PC games would incorporate Direct3D technology... That'd make them just about the last developer on the planet to do so, which for a great design house like Sega is shameful.

Where there's dirt there's gold, and thank the heavens that some good games showed up this month. Red Baron finally turned up in our offices, and while it wasn't as earth shattering as we had hoped, it's still a very decent flight sim for those that enjoy a trip down memory lane to the days when pilots were suicidal maniacs. The release of Ultimate Race Pro from Kalisto is a shot in the arm for driving sim enthusiasts, especially those who take more of a slam bang approach to driving. It's fast, it's pretty, and it shows just how nice a game can look with the Power VR in comparison to the 3Dfx.

Then there's the expansion pack for Jedi Knight - Mysteries of the Sith, which should inject some longevity to the wonderful world of Star Wars action games. And for an interesting take on the real time strategy genre that puts Westwood's latest effort to shame, Legal Crime shows that you don't need to be a mega corporation to be able to make great games.

Apart from the above though, it has been in reality a lacklustre month for games in Australia. But even so, you should be able to find something that takes your interest, and hopefully it should be enough to tide you over until some of the big mid year titles start appearing, like Forsaken, Unreal, and even, dare I say it, Falcon 4.

THE PC POWERPLAY SCORING SYSTEM

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90-94%	GOLD A classic. Either an unquestionable example of superiority within its genre, or a ground breaking game that'll be setting trends.
80-90%	A strong, eminently playable game. Hard to fault and likely to still be on the hard drive in 6 months time.
60-80%	Competant and generally enjoyable. Flaws or mediocrity hold these games back from higher ratings.
40-60%	Average and ordinary. Not bad, not good. Ideal gift
0-40%	Bad, really bad. Boring, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible

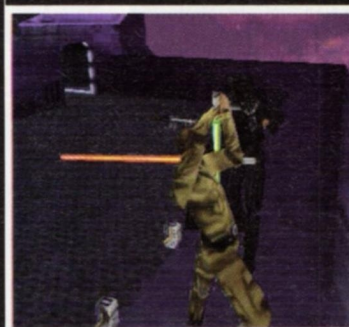
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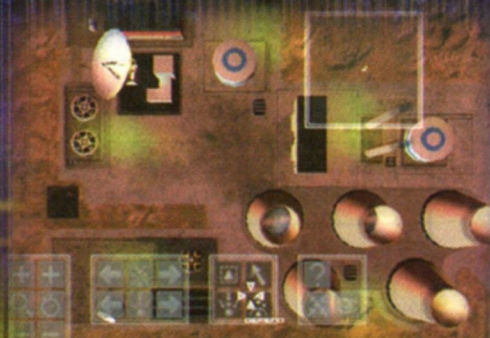
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RED BARON II

The Fokkers are coming out of the sun! Red Baron II is just a little bit late (like, a couple of years), but despite no 3D acceleration in the initial release does deliver everything else we expect.

Say the words 'most eagerly awaited flight sim' to most gamers and they think Falcon 4.0. Say 'most eagerly awaited flight sim sequel' and the answer would have to be Red Baron II. It's taken four long years since work began on this, but the wait is over. Those that can remember playing the original will be salivating in anticipation of rekindling some fine flight memories. Does Red Baron II live up to expectations? You bet your sweet Fokker it does!

As real as it gets

You only have to play Red Baron II for a few minutes to appreciate the attention to detail that went into it. Play for a few hours, and you're left gob-smacked. You can fly 22 of the 40 planes in the game, and each plane is individually modelled with its own flight characteristics. The damage model

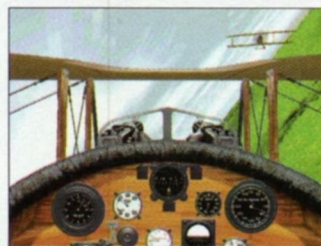
is simply brilliant. Your plane is affected depending on where and how hard you got hit. You can even see the damage inflicted with the various camera views, like broken struts and wings.

Sierra are showing off their new ThreeSpace3D engine with Red Baron II, which is very fast and allows for a high level of terrain and object modelling, but does not support hardware acceleration. Because of this I found the terrain rendering a little too pixelated even at 640x480, but I could be spoiled by my 3Dfx. The next patch should address this 'problem', though. Even more impressive than the graphics for once are the sound effects. The sound engine is true 3D, meaning the orientation of your head affects what you hear. There's different sounds for each type of machine gun: creaking wood if you pull to hard on the stick,

engine failure noises, flak explosions, machine guns, rockets, planes crashing - great stuff!

Control freak

Because these birds are sluggish and unforgiving, you're



(left) WWI Piloting lesson #1: always make sure you put your cigars out properly - these planes are basically made out of balsa wood % string!





The story about comradeship between enemy pilots during the early stages of the war is a top one - but as you can see, it didn't last long

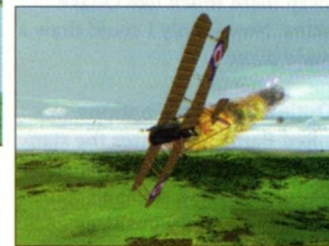


FINALLY, A DECENT READ!

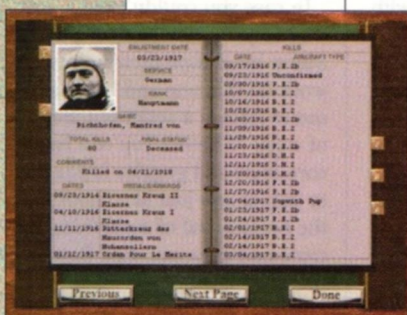
Yay! Game developers may actually be listening to their fans for once. When we say we want large, interesting and informative manuals, we mean it. Red Baron II excels in this department. How would you like an informative summary of WWI with specific reference to air combat? Or perhaps you'd rather a moving retelling of Manfred Von Richtofen's phenomenal achievements? Maybe a pictorial database of all WWI aircraft (most of which you can fly in the game) is more up your alley? I take it you get the picture. The manual has it all, with detailed explanations of gameplay, flight formations, flight basics and not-so-basics and awards and medals for each army. There's even a separate manual on multiplayer which talks you through it all from go to whoa!

going to need some pretty decent controls to be able to fly effectively. The bonus is that you don't need a 235-button joystick to

control the plane, as you really don't have many options. At a minimum you'll need a joystick with a throttle controller. This allows you to fly without taking your hands off the controls and your eyes off the screen. Rudder pedals are optional, but they help you land and perform some advanced aerial tactics. You'll also need a 4-way hat switch on the joystick, otherwise you'll quickly lose sight of your target if he disappears from your forward view. This is probably what shat me most about Red Baron II. You see, padlock mode



doesn't work too well in these planes because of the open canopy. You have your eyes locked on the target, but have absolutely no idea which way you're facing because you have no frame of reference. For this reason, a 'radar' kind of thingy would have been nice as an option. Sure, it's not 'authentic', but WWI pilots knew where their targets were because they could turn their heads. Try that with a flat monitor in front of you and you usually get an eyeful of wall. RBII comes with a paint shop





AIR COMBAT 80 YEARS AGO

Forget high-g loops, forget 60 degree AoAs, forget near-vertical ascent; in fact, forget everything you've ever read or done in a jet sim to date. It's amazing to consider that WWI pilots were flying airplanes in a combat role barely ten years after the first successful flight. This was where it all began, where Immelmans and air combat manoeuvres that are considered standard today were born. That being said, some advice from an 'expert' (well, I played this game for a few days, ok?) may not go astray.

- Remember that you don't have missiles, only machine guns (some planes have rockets, but they're not renowned for their accuracy) that have an effective range of about 500m. This means you have to get nice and close before you open up - if you can smell the other guy's aftershave you're close enough.
- You don't have the 500-odd rounds allocated to you in today's sardine cans with wings, so be picky when you fire.
- In general, don't mess with balloons. Yes, they may look like a big round target, but they are usually heavily defended as they are a key observation station. Same goes for 2-seater aircraft - they can shoot outta their ass.
- Be constantly aware of the position of the sun. Back when planes had no radar, an enemy flying at you with the sun behind him is almost invisible.
- Check your six. Lots.

program that rivals the great Quake for skin design - and it's even built into the game! After you reach the appropriate rank, you get to paint your plane any way you want. Every part of the plane is customisable, and you can save your works of art and swap them much like Quake skins. Now if only I could draw a nude plane....

Options, options, options

Red Baron II features the standard Quick Flight/ Missions/ Campaign setup we've all come to know and love, but also includes a full mission editor and random mission creation. The missions vary from balloon busting, CAP, bomber escort and my favourite, strafing ground

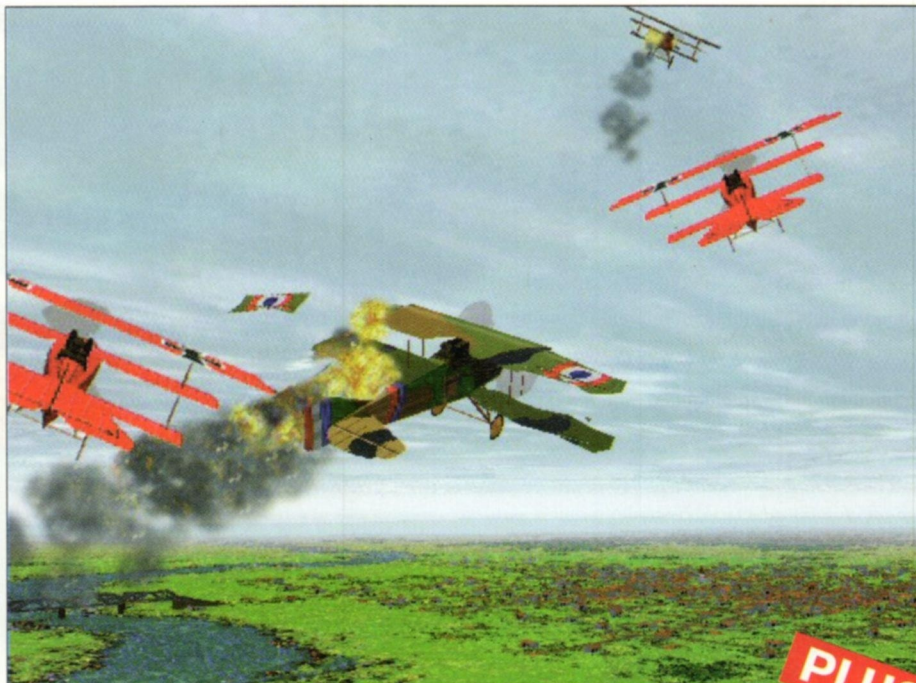
targets - live longer than five minutes and you deserve a Congressional Medal of Honour! The campaign mode is detailed to bug-gery, with accurate historical data like real WWI aces and squadrons, staggered introduction of aircraft etc. The campaign mode is,

if I may be allowed to use a cliché, truly dynamic. Skirmishes happen all over the place during a battle, and you can choose to join in or stick to your objective. Your performance also affects the options available to you, like rank (duh!), choice of aircraft and requests for transfer to another squadron, in case ol' Manfred is giving you some grief. There does come a time though when the thirst for human blood becomes overpowering - enter multiplayer.

Shoot your friends for fun and profit

Multiplay is offered via LAN, modem, serial or Internet, but there could have been more options considering all the cool

stuff happening with flight sims these days. Would the ability to fly a two-seater with your mate have been all that difficult? And why can't you fly a bomber for some variety? Sierra are also supporting Red Baron II via the Sierra Internet



PLUS+



One of the best parts of RBII is the realistic damage that you can inflict (and be inflicted with)

Gaming System, but of course, with no Australian servers, don't even bother unless Mr Telstra has sold you a big fat expensive pipe.

In case you couldn't tell, I was very impressed with this game. Sierra have done their homework on this one and have held out to release a very tight piece of work. Whether you're a hardcore scarf and goggles kinda guy or gal, or you just like shooting the bejesus out of something up close and personal, Red Baron II hits the mark.

George Argy



<http://www.sierra.com>
Sierra are offering the complete original Red Baron free on their web site, in all its 16 colour splendour.



Category	Flight Sim
Players	1-16
Publisher	Sierra
Price	\$89.95
Rating	G
Available	Now

For A totally immersive WWI experience. Attention to detail is incredible.

Against No 3D hardware support. View options make dog-fighting more than one opponent too hard.

Need P133, 16MB RAM, 60MB HDD free, 4X CD-ROM, Win95

Want P200, 32MB RAM, Fast 2D video, 350MB HDD free (full install), Force feedback joystick, throttle, rudder pedals



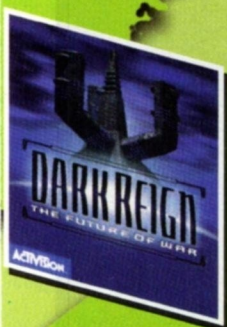
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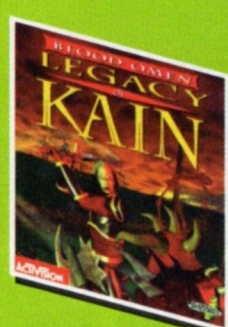
dark reign:
the future
of war



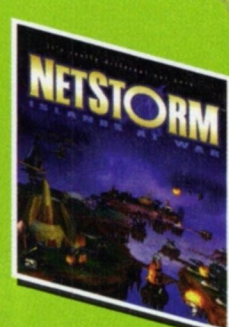
hexen II:
the beginning
of the end



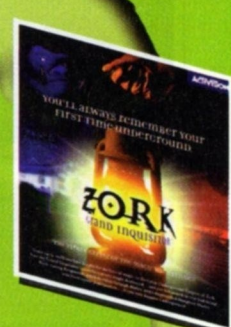
heavy gear:
the new breed



blood omen:
legacy of kain



netstorm:
islands at war



zork:
grand
inquisitor

www.activision.com



LORDS OF MAGIC

It's the third in the eminently playable Lords of the Realm series, but it isn't LOTR 3. This time around it's all about magic.

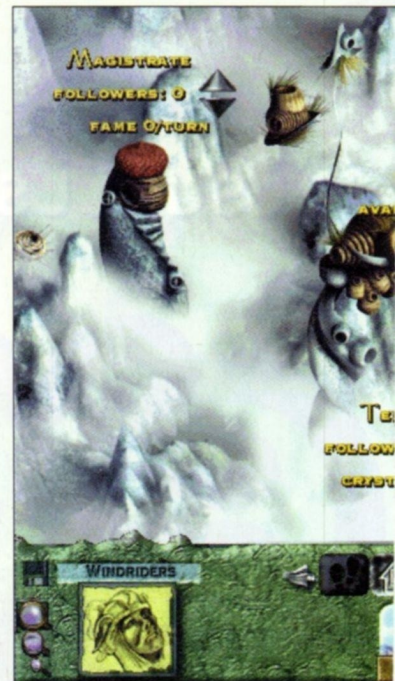
Lords Of Magic is the third title in the loosely-collected "Lords" series from Impressions, following on from Lords Of The Realm 1 & 2. Note, however, that it is not called Lords Of The Realm 3. An obvious point perhaps, but one that suggests some sort of explanation may be required. LoM has been granted an acronym change because, while retaining several familiar aspects from the previous two games, it is quite a different beast in many ways. Compared to LotR, LoM has much more in common with fellow fantasy strategy game, Heroes Of Might & Magic, with one major exception being the inclusion of a real-time combat engine.

Reuniting the tribes

The world of Urak, divided across eight tribes representing the various faiths of Order, Chaos, Life and Death, as well as the elements, Earth, Air, Fire and Water, has been conquered by the evil sorcerer Balkoth and his Death-worshipping underlings. As a Lord of one the other seven faiths, it is down to you to defeat Balkoth and reunite the lands once again. Before you select a faith (which determines your starting position on the map), it is necessary to embark upon a profession. Here you are handed the rather conventional choice of Fighter, Mage or Thief, and your selection will have a great deal of influence over how you ought to play. The faith you

choose (and you cannot be Death until you have won the game at least once) will affect the type of army you initially have under your command. Chaos has an army full of barbarian warriors, goblins and ogres, Air features a mix of fairies, storm giants and dragons, while elves, dryads and unicorns fight under the flag of Life, for example.

Once the game is underway, the similarity to HoMM becomes startlingly clear. While your view of the map might be from an isometric perspective, the gameplay in the early stages is



It was a nice idea, and the 'Lords' series has been a good one. But LOM has too many flaws to be a great game, just a good one





remarkably familiar. You begin with your Lord standing near your city centre. Accompanying him or her will be three troop units, each of which consists of three troops of that type, making for a relatively small army of ten people altogether. Any Champions you subsequently recruit can also maintain an army of three troop units, just like an opponent's Lord who swears fealty to you can as well. Moving your Lord around the map will reveal numerous caves or monster lairs which you can enter to gain some experience in combat. Cleansed lairs then provide valuable rest areas for your troops. Gold and crystal mines, heavily guarded by monsters, are also to be found, along with breweries. These three structures produce the game's most important resources.

Strange design flaws

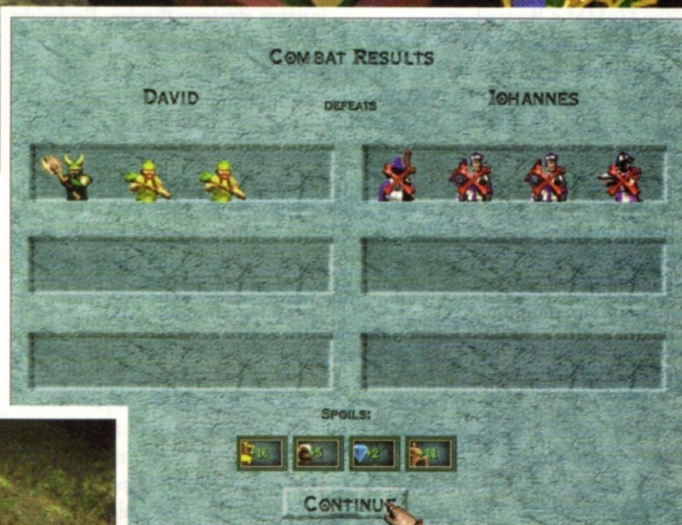
After staking out your territory to some extent, you will then need to reclaim your Great Temple from Balkoth. Doing so increases your fame and persuades the people in your city to fully support your quest. From now on you can call on them to work tirelessly producing

greater quantities of resources and offering their services in the military. So far, so good. Once you have freed your Temple, started stationing Champions in the various buildings around your city to impart



their greater expertise, and your heightened fame is encouraging more followers to join your cause, then LoM seems to take the shape of a decent game. But, depressingly, it doesn't go anywhere afterwards.

There are some strategic decisions I found worthwhile. The three types of Lord do actually play differently. The Fighter (like the Knight or Barbarian in HoMM) is strongest early on and



(above left) sure, gold & crystal mines may be important to keep a settlement's economy rolling, but everyone knows that without a brewery you might as well forget hopes of conquest & pillage. (above) Ye olde "spreadsheet disguised as fantasy runic stone menu" trick



you need to move quickly to win, while the Thief and Mage are more powerful in the end-game (like HoMM's Wizard or Warlock). Then there's the mercenary dilemma. Mercenaries are cheaper in the short term than new trainees, but can be a real resource drain if you hang on to them. But once they've fought a few battles, and have accumulated some valuable experience, it becomes a tough decision to dismiss them. If only there was a way to convert mercenaries to normal troops, perhaps with a one-off payment, instead of hiring them for a couple of turns before immediately releasing them again. Decisions, eh?

The strategy side of the LoM equation is not its weakness.

Rather, some strange design flaws and buggy inconsistencies prevent it from ascending to the fantasy strategy throne. Probably the most annoying is that to access any building under your control (even to do mundane things like switch production from gold to ale, or train an infantry unit), you have to physically visit that building. This tends to mean either you make constant trips back and forth to keep up the micro-management, or you train a unit whose job it is to wander around town all game.

Long term value? Maybe not...

True, you can have a Champion resident in one of the recruitment buildings, but then they won't be available to take

into battle. It's an interesting idea, maybe more realistic than in most games, but, if it leaves you feeling fed up, then it's an idea that doesn't work.

Another flawed idea is the real-time combat. Certainly, it looks very nice, but the AI is quite poor. What's the point of a real-time combat engine if you have to keep pausing to nudge your army around the battlefield because they're so thick? I guess this is what they mean in the manual by "a sort of Turn Based/Real Time hybrid". That is, the real-time is so inefficient you have to play it as if it were turn-based. Unless you hit the Auto button, of course. There's also only one map and, ultimately, only one opponent in Balkoth and his Death troops. Despite the variety of different faiths and professions and the possibilities of the map editor, LoM is fairly slim in terms of long term value. Compared to Heroes Of Might & Magic, Lords Of Magic offers a more realistically structured game to be played at a slower pace (prepare for long waits between turns), but for the reasons above is easily the inferior game.

David Wildgoose



Only one map?! Wake up and watch the world rush by, Sierra

PLUS+
Sierra
ON-LINE
WWW.SIERRA.COM
Patches are available at
www.sierra.com
You'll need them.

74%

Category	Strategy
Players	1-8 (Network, modem)
Publisher	Sierra
Price	\$89.95
Rating	MA15+
Available	Now

For Attractive presentation. The Thief proves to be one of best units I've seen in a strategy game.

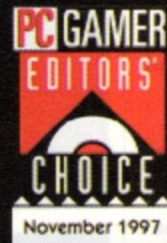
Against Design flaws and poor combat AI spoil the enjoyment. Inadequate tutorial. Lacks long term challenge.

Want Pentium, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD
P166, 32Mb RAM, 12xCD

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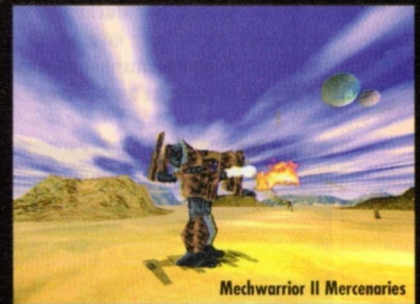
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Mechwarrior II Mercenaries



Interstate '76



Turok: Dinosaur Hunter

DEADLOCK 2: Shrine Wars

When the first Deadlock turned up we were amazed that the arcade Accolade could produce a PC strategy game at all. Now we're amazing they're still trying...

Have you ever suffered from the following type symptoms?

1. Becoming frustrated when observing ant-farms and muttering things like "Bloody lazy ants, build better quality tunnels!".
2. People talk about their favourite works of art, and you secretly dream of the Encyclopedia of Train Timetables Volume 6.
3. Whoopee it's Friday afternoon, time for the great weekend of socks and underpants categorisation!

Don't let a massive case of anal retentive behaviour go to waste, for there exist games that are purpose built for the likes of you and me. X-Com Apocalypse is the king of the genre, a game that has you organising everything from what type of boots an individual wears right up to controlling the destiny of a huge metropolis. Close behind is Civ2 and Sim-City, games that will keep you locked in a darkened computer room long enough to make your first venture into sunlight one of shrieks and hisses.



There are few things better than a hard-core strategy game - but this goes just a bit too far



anywhere from five to two dozen territories. The early stages of play are taken up with choosing a single area for your initial colony with the plan of expanding into each territory at the expense of your rivals. Each colony starts as a bare 6x6 grid system but through your man-



agement skills will transform into a thriving city-state where subjects smile all day long, ambitious research is undertaken and the Dogs of War shall be unleashed. Basic buildings like farms, apartment blocks and mines are first on the agenda but a huge list of advanced construction choices aren't far behind.



Building means growth, but greater thirst for supplies of raw materials and the limited building space of the grid will have you expanding into the other territories building new colonies. As is always the case with dreams of expansion, a strong military is needed to make sure your new territories are safe and your enemies are far from safe. If you have trouble maintaining the precarious balance between economy, military and social policy a visit to the Skirineen (black market) is in order to buy your way out of trouble. This can bring shame down on your leadership, but like 'ol Billy Clinton keep your fingers crossed that a nice war will help clear the record.

Busy busy busy...

There's heaps to keep you occupied, but most of the problems from the original Deadlock are still lingering. Playing on a large planet with numerous territories under control is still a hassle. A newly introduced colony manager that aims to squeeze all relevant colony info onto one screen is confusing and not extensive enough, so it's often back to micro-management hell.

What would have been welcome is an AI assistant that acts as caretaker for mundane tasks as in MOO2. The combat side of things is unchanged from Deadlock 1, and is still too basic for a game where military conquest is the main ideal. You drag and drop units into enemy controlled areas, then at the end of your turn watch a film playback of what eventuated. Before entering battle you can at least give your units basic orders such as retreating before destruction, or attacking certain types of buildings in enemy strongholds rather than just guns blazing. A larger emphasis on developing and fighting



over sea based territories (subs ahoy!) is a good addition, as are extra tech levels like cloning.

Have a good fiddle

If lots of overly fiddly management activities and the lack of complex tactical combat don't put you off, Deadlock 2 is a good entrant into the "We of the Sun haters" club. Another bonus is Accolade's free Internet multiplayer server, which gives Deadlock 2 a positive multiplayer spin. An area which is sadly lacking in too many other big name (Civ2, we pronounce thee guilty) titles. Could be called Deadlock 1.5, but fans of the original will have fun with this sequel.

Pete Sharpe



78%

Category	Turn based strategy
Players	1-4 Modem, LAN, TCP/IP
Publisher	Accolade
Price	STBA
Rating	G8+
Available	Now

For Additions in technology, buildings and military units are always welcome in sequels. AI is more aggressive than in the original. New Campaign mode and map editor are entertaining goodies.

Against Needs streamlining in the population management area. The new interface whilst being less windows orientated, involves too much clicking, painful after a few hours of play.

Need P90, 16Mb RAM, WIN95.

Want P133

THE REAP

Another Finnish classic arcade shooter to add to the long list. Finnish? You bet!



Ahh, just like the good old days - back when game were mindlessly violent and shockingly addictive

there a plenty of excellent effects. Whenever you destroy a vehicle or building, you see the survivors from inside fleeing the explosion - you then mow them all down with your cool Electric Spline weapon. On the underwater levels, when you blow up a submarine it sends shockwaves across

the screen, buffeting your small craft for a few moments. From start to finish, The Reap is a great looking game.

Play balanced
Beyond graphical thrills



What is it about Finland and classic arcade games? Housemarque, a development team consisting entirely of Finnish blokes, wrote Super Stardust a few years ago for the Amiga and, subsequently, the PC. Asteroids clones don't come any better than SS - a game that, even today, would still sneak into my top twenty games of all time. Now they've turned their attention to another ancient shoot 'em up. It's Zaxxon, only this time it's called The Reap.

Pesky aliens

Plot-wise, The Reap is novel enough. You play a pilot with the Alien Task Force, charged with carrying out the cancellation of the Earth Project. Seems the pesky humans have become too smart for their own good and are on the verge of uncovering the real truth concerning vital alien locations like Atlantis, Far North Queensland and some desert regions in America. Basically this means dive-bombing the planet and blasting the crap out of everything.

Actually, time to come clean. It's not really Zaxxon at all. Rather than an evolutionary update paying homage to a once great game (like Stardust did to Asteroids), The Reap merely borrows the odd diagonal method of scrolling from Zaxxon. Thus, while it may appear similar, this

is purely on a superficial level. Underneath, The Reap is essentially a vertical or side-on blaster, but with a funny viewpoint (pun intended!).

The waves of enemy attackers come thick and fast. Torpedoes arrive in tight rows, forcing you to blow a hole through them to survive. Bombers swoop past, peeling off if you don't shoot them and coming back for a second run. Turrets spray laser fire indiscriminately, while some lob missiles which you can trigger by flying over a spot they have targeted. Visually,

(although that is a large part of the appeal of this type of game), Housemarque have concocted some interesting ideas. Before each level you can choose which one you wish to tackle next - which is always a good thing. Better, though, is the way you can opt to power up a weapon other than the one you currently have in action. This means that power-ups aren't wasted when you've already maxed the one you're using. There's a co-operative mode, too, that gives you collectively twice the number of bullets, but individually you only

receive half the amount of power-ups. In other words, a simple way of ensuring that it isn't too easy in a two player game.

You could pick holes here and there. You could complain that very occasionally things can shoot you from off screen, but you can't hit them. Or that the levels without a boss tend to end too abruptly. Or that sometimes the screen gets too cluttered. To which I would argue - true, true, and true, but who cares when it's this much fun? Or even that the whole game is simple, hold down the fire button action all the way. To which I would argue - but that's the whole point!

David Wildgoose

Note: Viewpoint is a fairly old Zaxxon clone, available now on the Playstation. It was a bad pun, I know.

76%

Category	Shoot 'em up
Players	1-2
Publisher	Mainstream/Take 2
Price	STBA
Rating	G
Available	Now

For Classy, stylish, old school shoot 'em up action from the guys who know how to do it.

Against Some minor distractions (which are too minor or not distracting enough to worry about!)

Need Pentium, 16Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P133, control pad (with autofire)



NONE NEEDED

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- Everything here is hyper-real.. The detailed cockpits, the thermal view, the trees, the forests and even the helicopters that intelligently hide behind hills. In fact, it's as close as you can get to 70 different ground and air vehicles and their weapons systems without being arrested.
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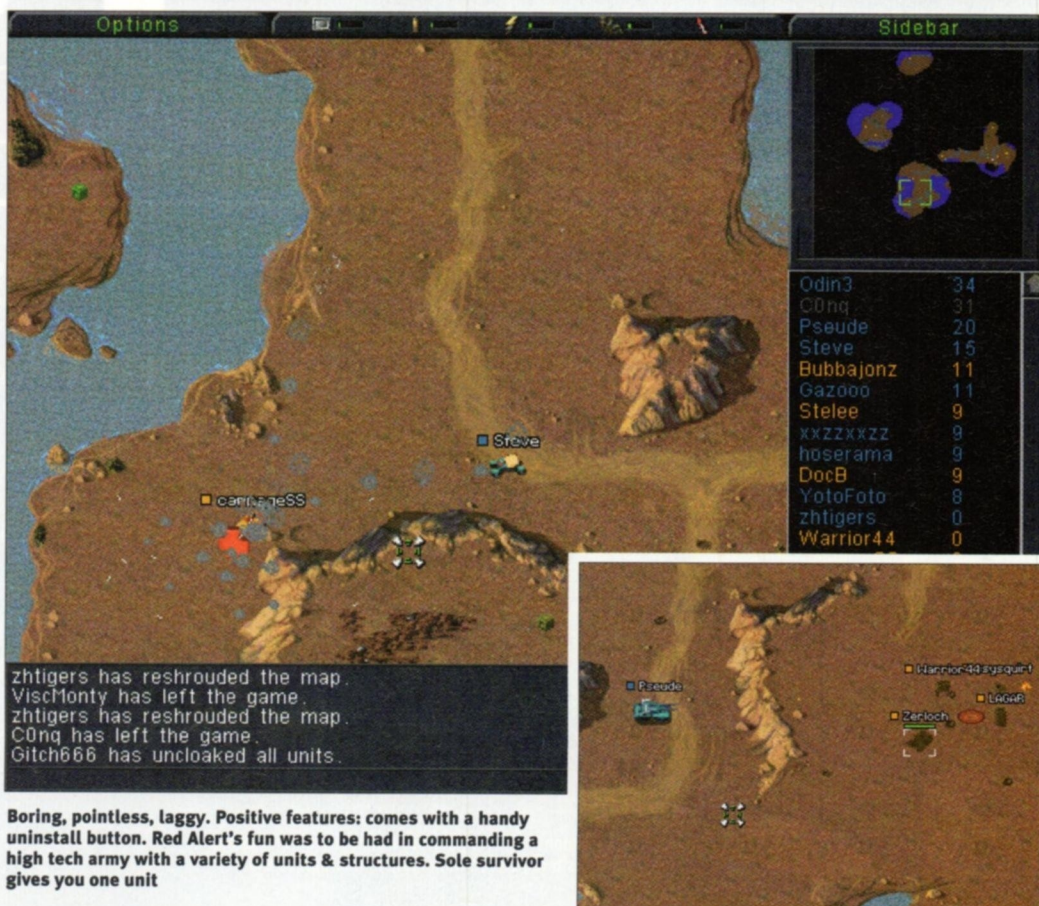
C&C: Sole Survivor

Oh look, another C&C derivative to keep us going until the release of Tiberium Sun - which at this rate, looks like coinciding with the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics...

Hey Westwood Studios what the hell is going on here? Command & Conquer fans have had to put up with only two C&C titles over the past year, and both of them were uninspiring Red Alert expansion packs. There's little news of C&C2: Tiberium Sun on the horizon, and to top things off Sole Survivor has now appeared. A game that will have C&C fans everywhere wearing black armbands, for this is a turgid piece of rubbish. A boring travesty that should have been laughed off the drawing board the moment it was conceived.

A rancid turkey

If, for some reason, you become forced to play this turkey, don't fret as it's an online only experience so you can at least share your pain collectively with others. All games are played through Westwood Online (formerly WChat), and it's just a case of jumping into the Sole Survivor channels and picking what style of game you want to play. While there's sexy sounding names like Capture the Flag, Footy, Team vs Team and so forth the basic (and we mean BASIC) aim of Sole Survivor is very simple. Choosing one unit from the compliment of land forces derived from the original C&C, including all the varieties of tanks, infantry and dinosaurs from the Covert Ops bonus levels you launch into an online arena containing 1 to 50 other Internet opponents and click around the battlefield trying to rack up kill points. The battles are played on large C&C maps using the old and crusty C&C graphics engine, which is showing it's age badly due to a lack of complex terrain features as seen in Dark Reign or Total Annihilation. The supposed injection of fun into this stale environment is the creative use of upgrade crates. The maps are littered with them. Crates that will boost your armour, shot power/range, speed and even some tricky stealth and the dreaded "everyone dies at once"



Boring, pointless, laggy. Positive features: comes with a handy uninstall button. Red Alert's fun was to be had in commanding a high tech army with a variety of units & structures. Sole survivor gives you one unit



Armageddon effect. Although getting blown away because somebody on the other side of the map picked up a super crate is just a frustratingly stupid idea, the whole crate concept allows for unit balancing so that for example a souped up little Recon Bike has a chance to take on the once feared Mammoth Tank. Of course not all crates are nice and wholesome, some can teleport you to unknown areas of the map while others will give you 30 second full power before draining you down to wimp level once again. Get greedy and grab too many crates, and the Ion Cannon might blast your health down to zero or to near death health levels. That's it folks. Run around, and hope you grabbed more good crates than the guy you are about to click on. It's horrible, there's no excitement in combat. You just click once, and if you see your health

getting down run away and search for a health boost crate. The Quake engine makes for a good action environment, flat C&C maps certainly do not.

Laggy as hell

Quickly ditching the every man for himself arena, it was time to check out the most popular form of Sole Survivor, namely Capture the Flag. You and your team mates co-ordinate attacks to try and steal the enemy base flag bringing it back to friendly HQ. A bit of excitement comes when the "I've got the flag, need back-up for the run home" call comes in, but it doesn't last long. A big battle consists of only a short volley of tedious mouse clicks and it's all over, or worse still the greatest enemy of Internet gaming - lag. It's the most talked about problem in Sole Survivor chat areas, that curious symptom

of lag where you click and wait for a few seconds until your unit moves. Another interesting effect involves pausing and skipping between moving from Point A to Point B with an unnatural death occurring somewhere in between. While we can't blame Westwood for the general vagaries of the Internet, it does seem a bit lacking on their part that other online only games like Tanarus (reviewed last issue) offer much better lag resistance than Sole Survivor does.

Boring...

With features such as an inbuilt ranking system, and team play modes Westwood have tried to flesh out some interest but it just doesn't work. The clicketh here, clicketh there with one boring unit gameplay is just too much of a killer. Why did Westwood inflict this upon us? The only plausible theory is that a bunch of marketing types staged a coup and locked all the "real" Westwood designers away in a dungeon somewhere. Maybe dubious organic substances and far too much beer are being consumed at Westwood? "Weeeeeeee (hiccup) I've got a tank under my control, whaaaaat funnn". That's no excuse though, I tried playing the game drunk and it still utterly bored me. Sole Survivor has shown that it is possible to suck every ounce of fun out of C&C style gameplay, oh what a shame. Let's all close our eyes and forget this ever happened.

Pete Sharpe



What the hell were they thinking!!!!?

28%

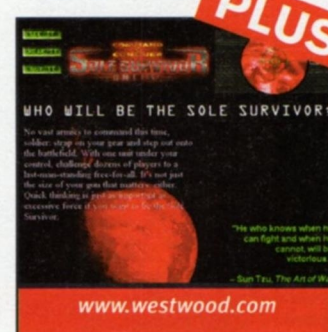
Category	Online clickfest
Players	1-50 at a time
Publisher	Westwood Studios
Price	STBA
Rating	TBA
Available	Now

For At least it's not a virus, easily uninstalled.

Against Repetitive, simplistic and the new benchmark in how not to do an online game. Incredibly boring.

Need P90, 16Mb RAM, Internet connection, WIN95.

Want Nothing Special.





ULTIMATE RACE PRO

It's not often a bundled demo for a specific platform makes it to the shelves as a stand alone game, but Ultimate Race was just too good to let slip.

It was about a year ago that NEC's Power VR 3D card was launched, and though there was much happiness around here at the time, in the end the card just didn't match up to the 3Dfx in terms of 3D features and sheer speed. However, there was one game specifically created to showcase the capabilities of the Power VR, and that was Ultimate Race for Kalisto. Back when we had

just received the card and had loaded up Ultimate Race for the first time, we soon had a very crowded office as people flocked in from all the other ergonomic workstations to see what was making everyone gasp with amazement. It was simply jaw dropping, the lighting effects were fantastic, the level of detail was amazingly clear and crisp, and the racing wasn't too bad

either. A top way to make us think that the Power VR was the next big thing, at least for a while.

Full 3D support

There was only one track however, and even though it was a really big one it wasn't long before we all became more than a little bored with it, and the anal retentive driving model didn't help much either. But now it's a year later and Kalisto are back with Ultimate Race Pro, with built in support for every 3D card on the market as well as a software mode too. And what else has changed? The original version had plenty of potential, the driving model was good, and it looked great, but is there enough there to persuade racing enthusiasts to shell out some of the hard earned for it, especially with such quality opposition as TOCA and

the like? Well, the answer is...sort of, depending on what you want from a racing sim.

Kalisto have seen the light (praise be!) and included more than one huge track this time around. But if you did get a chance to take a look at the original the tracks are going to look pretty familiar. They're going to look pretty familiar because it's actually the same track, just chopped up into different sections and sometimes done in reverse. You might be excused for feeling a little cheated about

this state of events, but the original track was pretty huge, and it's not exactly the same - Kalisto have changed things around just a little in places. Even so, how hard could it be to create some new tracks rather than just recycle the old ones? Though each different track can be played under different weather conditions, and during night or daytime, so there is a fair degree of variety.

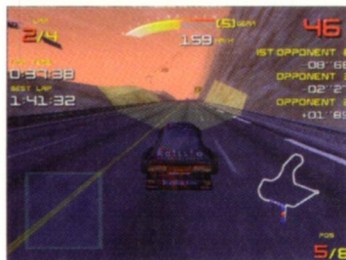
Deathmatch arena

There are new cars this time around too, not just different colours on the same stock standard car, as with the original Ultimate Race.

There are about 8 cars to choose from,



Though the AI favours the "slow down for the hairpin" approach, it's much more fun to powerslide around it



(above) The lighting effects and dynamic sunsets are this game's strong point (right) It looks like one of the AI drivers has forgot to bring some change for the toll. Sucko Bucko!



and each comes with a standard setup for acceleration, top speed, grip (handling), and 'shields', so you can modify the car setup to your liking. It's kind of like allocating points to a character in a RPG, you have a set amount to start with, but you can choose which areas you're strong in - and it's a very nice touch too. The cars themselves seem to handle in much the same way as the original, even though this time around they have been fitted with extra wide tires that look very silly. The shields setting is strange, for it

seems only valid for the death-match 'arena', which is just pretty much a demolition derby in a circular arena. Whether you are playing deathmatch or properly racing, you still allocate power to the shields, and no matter what you put your car through it won't sustain damage, and the car will still drive exactly the same as it would otherwise.

In terms of the driving model, again, if you've played the original you'll already be well prepared for URP. It's still a strange mix between road racing and rally driving, with liberal doses of the handbrake necessary for the many hairpin turns, and the necessity for rally style sliding turns to get around just about every corner. It's nicely done though, and moves along at quite an impressive pace, so once you get the hang of the controls it's real edge of your seat driving all the way, and the AI opponents aren't half bad either. They won't just stick to the same line no matter what you're doing, but they

will move out from behind you to overtake, and though the AI did seem to have a bit of a problem getting through the tollgates of one section, overall they were quite polished opponents on all three difficulty levels. But AI is still only AI, though Kalisto have recognised the importance of multiplayer and included a full suite of multiplayer options, TCP/IP, IPX, Modem, and serial (though

no split screen action is available). And, of course, multiplayer action is where the game really begins to shine, and thankfully Kalisto have made use of Win 95's Direct Play suite for multiplayer connections rather than use a proprietary system. The only touch really needed for multiplayer would be a dedicated (and free) server for Internet play, but there is a very nice Java chat section on their website (www.ultimaterace.com/chat.htm) to find opponents and get IP addresses and so on.

All up, Ultimate Race Pro is a good game, if not a great one. The driving model is unique, hovering in between a serious road racer and an arcade rally game, and once you get the hang of it, it's quite a bit of fun. Pity that there's no tournament series, and not enough tracks to keep the players interested for any length of time. Still looks very pretty though (especially at high res on a boofy machine with a Power VR2).

Gareth Jones

68%

Category Arcade racing
Players 1-4
Publisher Kalisto/Microprose
Price \$79.95
Rating G
Available Now

For Very, very pretty provided you have the hardware to run it with all detail on. Decent array of multiplayer options, and a driving model that's not too serious, not too arcadey, but just about right for the non-hard-core driving sim enthusiast.

Against Once again, not enough tracks, and those that are there are mostly just cut ups of the original track from UR. The collisions aren't all that realistic either - cars tend to bounce off you rather than give a satisfying crunch.

Need P133, Win 95, 16MB RAM, 2 x CD

Want P200, 64MB RAM, 3Dfx/Power VR2/Direct 3D card.

3D ANY DIRECT 3D CARD IS SUPPORTED, THOUGH THE GAME WILL WORK BEST WITH A POWER VR2, OR 3Dfx.

PLUS+

Ultimate Race Pro
Game features
Screenshots
Technical support
Chat
Download the ULTIMATE RACE PRO
www.ultimaterace.com
The official site, with the aforementioned java applet for multiplayer matching.



PRO PILOT

MS Flight Sim has ruled the skies since the early days of DOS 3. Now Sierra has launched a pretender to the throne.

Flying a civil aircraft simulation in accordance with Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) rules is far from my normal Mach 1 with my hair on fire stuff, so, in evaluating this product I sought some guidance from professional aviators in this quite technical evaluation. Let's have a look at MS Flight Simulator's competition, which has the sales pitch of being the "complete flight simulation... a professional program...that takes you all the way through private, instrument and commercial preparation' all 'based on US Federal Aviation Authority guidelines.'

Pro Pilot puts you behind the pilot's seat of five aircraft; the single engined Cessna Skyhawk 172 and the Beechcraft Bonanza

V35, the dual engined Beechcraft Baron B58 and King Air B200, and finally the Cessna CitationJet 525. A good combination.

The game is US based and models around 3,000 North American airfields. Good for a first release product, but to appeal to the wider world community it will have to spread its wings a lot and include add-on packs for other countries. If it fails to do this, then it will never compete with MS Flight Sim; we'd all like to fly under Sydney Harbour Bridge, right?

Good bad manual

31 non-interactive flight tutorials run you through the basics of instrumentation, take off and

landing, communication etc. These are basic, and are complemented by an absolutely mountainous Flight Companion manual that tells you everything you need to know about flying in US airspace. Unfortunately, there's no detail on how to start each aircraft or use some of the complex communication and navigation instrumentation the game so accurately models! Amazing!

Arc up the game and you are thrown straight in the cockpit, heaven knows where! It would have been much better to

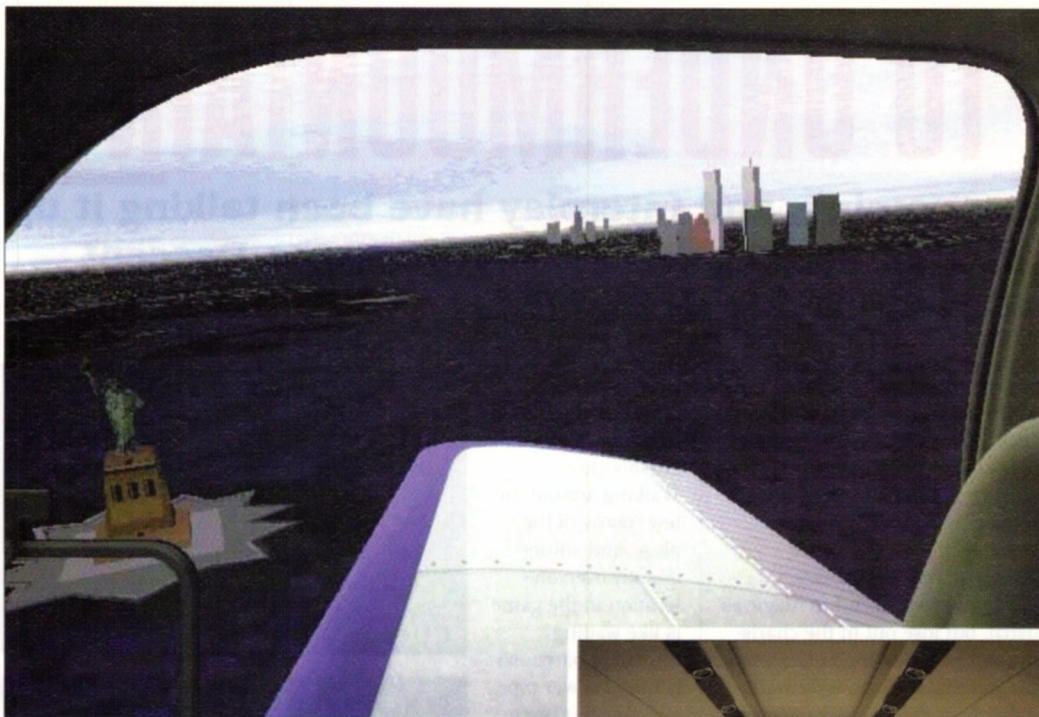
start in a briefing room where you conduct flight planning. Nonetheless, once you realise this and start accessing the menus, you become exposed to some of the good elements of the game. The Mission



40°40'31.93"N 73°43' 2.27"W + 8935 MSL



The ground detail looks great from up high, but once you get a bit lower the limitations become very apparent



Planner's interface is easy to use as you select which aircraft you want to fly, and the departure and arrival airfields. It generates a flight plan that complies with FAA requirements, and allows you to regenerate it until you get, say, the right day/night combination you might be after. Check you have enough fuel, then lodge the flight plan.

Virtual co-pilot

Back in the cockpit, knowing where you are this time, you can choose to slip a virtual co-pilot on board. He handles all comms and navigation radios, good! Although I did notice that he failed to tell me I was taking off with only one engine lit up at one time, bad! Pull down the Aircraft Checklists and move through the engine start/take off routine. A lot of effort has gone into these checklists, but the problem is that the game stops each time you drop them down. I had a Beechcraft Baron pilot with me, and he stated that this was very annoying; he also noted that the checklists were not complete, but nonetheless, enough to fly the sim.

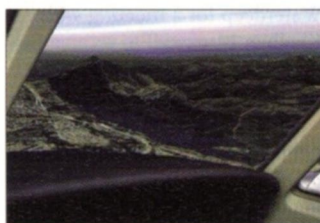
You don't just push the start

button in these planes; throttle, mixture, magnetos and so on, all must be set correctly before the engine will hold. All cockpit controls can be operated by mouse or keypress, and starting the engine is a superb sensation. In a piston-engined plane the screen shudders, the engine catches, backfires, catches then holds. In dual or gas turbine engined aircraft the sounds are equally well reproduced. Great work and a real thrill.

Turn on Aviation Power and all the instruments light up, two Comms and NAV radios, VHF Omnidirectional Range (VOR) and Non Directional Beacon (NDB) nav aids, and even a pop-up Global Positioning System. Flight can take place at any time of the day or night, and radio comms is so well simulated that it's almost information overload. Near busy airports like LAX, you can even see other aircraft in holding patterns while on your approach. Well done Sierra.

No 3D support!!

Now for the criticism. The game supports only one graphics resolution - 640x480 at 256 colors and has no 3D Card support. Instruments are great, but look outside and the world is a shimmering clump of colour that only looks good at high altitude. It's so bad on the ground that you have to keep your eye on the Gimbal because you feel like

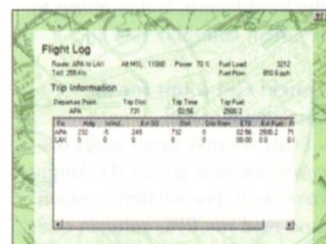
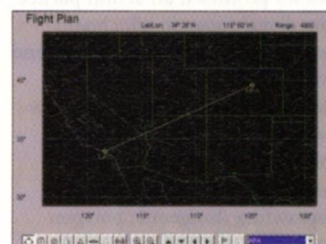
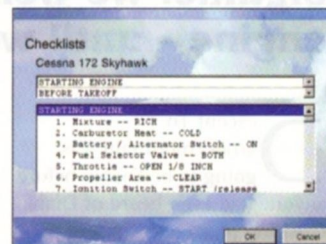
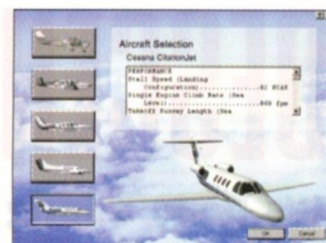


you are rotating about the horizontal axis. Wow!

The flight model for each aircraft strangely feels the same, and there's no sensation of speed. Try to bring the nose up past 90 degrees, or perform a barrel roll, and even try a loop (which although illegal, you can do in a twin or jet aircraft), and pop! The aircraft falls out of the sky! There's something seriously wrong with the flight model fellas!

There are many other rough spots, and Sierra has released a patch, but I didn't find any improvement other than a slight increase in frame rate. This sim is not for "anyone learning to fly". You've got to know how to fly to use the game, and either way, irrespective of its good points, it's likely to force you to adopt dangerous practices due to its poor graphics, flight model and predominant 'instruments only' flying.

Maj. Ian Lindgren



There are some nice touches here, but the flight model leaves a lot to be desired

62%

Category Flight sim
Players 1
Publisher Sierra
Price \$89.95
Rating G
Available Now

For Absolutely realistic sound, instruments, communications and navigation aids. Great FAA compliant mission planner.

Against Woeful graphics and poor flight models.

Need P90, 16MB RAM

Want Pentium 166 and 32MB RAM.



NONE

PLUS+

Sierra ON-LINE

WWW.SIERRA.COM

If you've purchased the game, find the Sierra web site and get the patch. If you find other problems tell them, and ask Sierra to fix the bugs in future patches.

DESCENT TO UNDERMOUNTAIN

It's been a long time coming, and Interplay have been talking it up bigtime. We were excited about this RPG that uses the Descent engine - until we started playing it, that is...

Descent To Undermountain was going to be Diablo before anyone had even heard of Diablo. Gushing press releases and previews promised an action-packed medieval romp in which you could go hackin' and slashin' and treasure huntin' with your leather-armoured and crossbow-wielding mates. All under the thrall of the true 3D Descent engine, modified to include sprawling dungeons, polygon orcs and mugs of yer best ale at the local tavern. It was going to be great. Interplay said so.

Quick! Get it out for the Christmas rush!

Sadly we may never really discover just how great DTU might have been. For whatever reason (and read my RPG column elsewhere this issue for elaboration on this), Interplay have decided to release it in a state that can only be described as incomplete. However, if this final boxed version (the one you have been able to buy since Christmas) is any indication as to what the developers had intended for their absolute complete game, then it's obvious DTU was never in serious danger of rising above mediocrity.

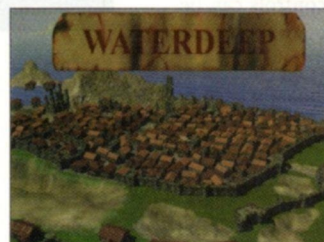
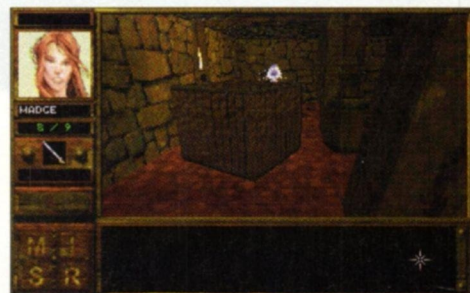
The game opens with the standard, albeit well-presented (except

for the ridiculous bug that means whenever you move the mouse it "paints" over the screen and obscures all the useful info!), character generation screens. Six races are available to choose from, each with their own strengths and weaknesses (dwarves are resistant to magic as usual, but lose out in the charisma stakes due to the rather simple fact that they are unbearably ugly). Next there is a character class (fighter, cleric, mage, thief, or any combination) to select and some basic statistics (strength, intelligence, etc) to sort out. Lastly you peruse a series of portraits, which swing wildly between quite attractive and fantastically twisted, and pick a face for your feisty new adventurer. Then it's off to the city of Waterdeep for a meeting with Khelben Blackstaff to receive further instructions. It seems that Waterdeep has been suffering midnight raids by the nasty denizens of Undermountain and he needs some keen volunteers to check it out. You're keen, so you volunteer.

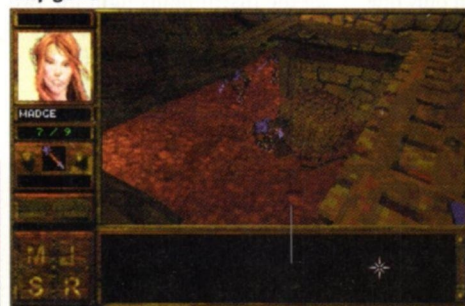
Ugly characters, and even uglier scenery

Introductions over, the game proper commences in a tavern. My first thought was, "God that

looks horrible". Followed instantly by, "God that's unbelievably slow". Walking around the few rooms in the place, and subsequently everyone location in the game, is like wading through a particularly turgid sewer pipe - and about as pretty, too. Everything, the walls, the furniture, the floor, most of the inhabitants, is a sort of sick-smear yellowish brown colour. Even the surrounding character and



Even giving your character a silly name doesn't provide much enjoyment. You're still stuck in the same crap game



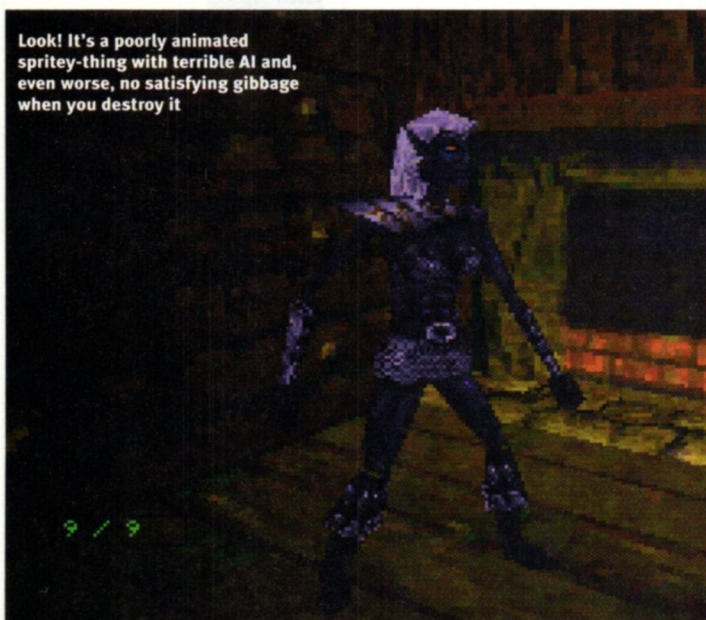
inventory screens are the same bloody colour. I haven't seen so much awful brown since, well, Betrayal In Antara. And I certainly haven't seen so much distracting pixellation since, erm, I honestly cannot remember a game pixellating this badly. Doom had cleaner graphics than this! Seriously, the original Descent

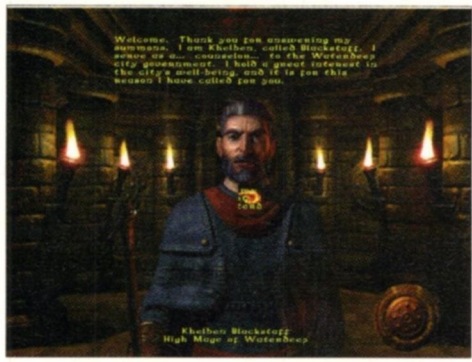
was a much better looking game and it had the benefit of running respectably on a 486. DTU (based on the D1 engine, not D2 - which helps explain why there is no 3D support) only recommends a P90, but will run pathetically on anything less than a P166. In fact,

I just checked my old Descent box and the min requirement is actually only a 386/33!

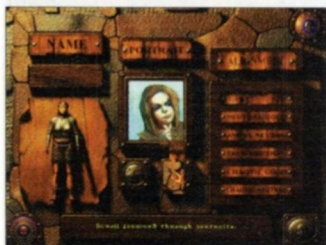
Worse yet, leaving aside issues of speed and aesthetics, is the way you have immense difficulty even just walking through a room thanks to, in part, the immobile NPCs, but mostly because the damn tables, boxes and chairs get in your way. Your character must be close to five foot wide, barging innocent furniture across the room as he passes through. On one occasion I accidentally sealed

Look! It's a poorly animated spritey-thing with terrible AI and, even worse, no satisfying gibbage when you destroy it





(main pic) An artist's impression of how you'll feel after playing this game for five minutes



finding flowers in a level of Quake. Any remotely interesting piece of design is ruined by an avalanche of glitches and incompetence. It's all very well to be able to chat with monsters, but when the next one you meet (often in the same room) just attacks you anyway, while the

first stands there ignorant of the whole scene - what is the point? The monster AI is pretty atrocious regardless. They bounce up and down on the spot as if riding pogo-sticks and then float in mid-air after you've killed them.

Actually, nearly everything floats in mid-air (potions, treasure and the like) just like in Descent. Monsters will attack you one at a time, though often not at all, and occasionally get bored and wander off while you are still fighting (and, no, it's not fleeing). Mostly the combat is so appallingly executed that it's utterly beyond belief. There's no real indication that you've hit someone with your weapon, until they fall down dead. Several

times the Control key (that's the attack button) simply stopped responding to my attentions and I could no longer use any weapon. Great!

I could continue for a while yet, but I think you get the picture. When playing a poor game that I really wanted to like I can always get some enjoyment from it. What I find most disappointing about this game is that there's nothing of redeeming value. There's nothing for which you can say, "Yeah, the graphics suck, the AI is shot, there's no multiplayer, the bugs are bloody annoying, but there's still this and that to keep me going". I think you'll feel the same way.

David Wildgoose

PLUS+



www.interplay.com/patches.html
You'll need 'em!

31%

Category RPG
Players 1
Publisher Interplay
Price \$89.95
Rating M
Available Now

For The Install didn't crash in DOS (but did in Wing5). Plot had potential and you can negotiate with some monsters, which adds some atmosphere.

Against More bugs than the set of Starship Troopers. A shockingly designed, unplayable mess.

Need P90, 32Mb RAM, 4xCD

Want P166

3D NO 3D SUPPORT IMPLEMENTED

off the only exit from a room because I failed to realise I'd been moving some heavy crates all over with every step I took. Such problems are simply inexcusable.

Monsters riding pogo sticks

Admittedly, there are some nice ideas scattered amongst the garbage, like thieves being capable of climbing up the walls and the slowly-revealing plot structure. Generally, though, pointing out the good bits is as hard as

BALLS OF STEEL

Balls of Steel, from the very outset, is a vibrant, creative title, filled with swish graphics and excellent animation.

Remember in level one of Duke Nukem there was a Duke Nukem pinball machine? When you tried to use it, he grumbles: "I don't have time to play with myself". That was an ad for this very pinball game, it's finally caught up with us, having been over two years in development.

It's the brainchild of Australian developers Wildfire Studios and Pinball Wizards, the result being a creative tangent from the hardcore realistic Pinballers. It's a multimedia experience, as in you are assaulted by delicious graphics from the outset, and a miasma of event related sounds. There are five full pinball boards that you can play on, each with its own distinct theme and bonuses.

Dynamically animation

The tables included are: The famous Duke Nukem effort, a sword-and-sorcery one called Barbarian, a Backdraft-style pyromaniac story called Firestorm, research gone wrong in "Mutation", and an Aliens-esque skirmish in Darkside. Each table has its own special targets, ball-savers and secrets, which you must gradually discover. They all have a major characteristic feature which will dynamically animate when key achievements are attained.

A noteworthy feature of Balls of Steel is that every spring, ramp and flipper on the board is treated as a real 3D object: the collisions are all physically correct, and if you nudge the table (you can, in particular directions!) the ball will collide in absolutely genuine interactions with the table and all objects upon it. It's slickly programmed and the attention to detail is just overwhelming, with about ten "special" attributes on each board. The paddles are quick, functional and responsive, with zero delay, even while animations are playing on other parts of the board.

At the base of the display you have the LED matrix screen,

which is the scoreboard, accurately portrayed as a grid of grainy yellow dots. Occasionally you will be awarded by an animation in the matrix, when you get a bonus or high score or

just lose a ball. Also, every one of the five boards includes a bonus round which involves a rudimentary video game inside the matrix, controlled by the paddles.

DUUUKE!

"Your face, your ass, what's the difference?" growls the Duke as he crushes a vile alien's skull under his heavy boot treads. Such is the new characterization

Duke's back! And he's still non-politically-correctly kicking alien's botty's





apparent in *Balls Of Steel*. The graphics are suitably cheesy while still looking great, speech events are quite amusing at times and of course the Duke Nukem table is just excellent. Enemy characters from the game wander about the pinball board, until you hit them with the ball and they get squished. There are also several classic new quotes from the bad-ass mo-fo himself, which are very cool and perfectly in keeping with the Duke Genre.

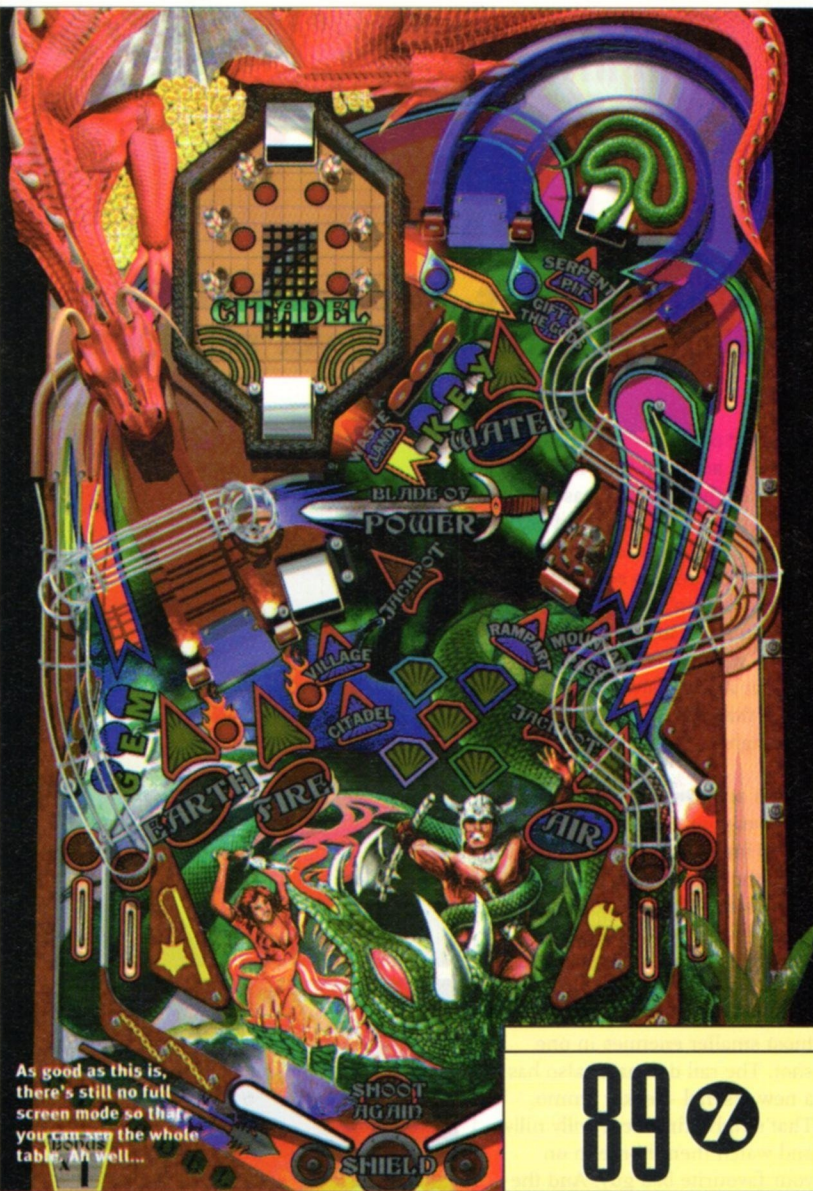
Balls of Steel also has an Internet option, which connects to a Global Scores ranking, and lodges your score, if you make the grade! This allows you to compete against players from around the world and shoot for top spot!

The only disappointing thing about *Balls of Steel* is that it only runs in 256 colour mode, I may be spoilt after too many 3Dfx titles, but it's become expected. This has no enormous impact on the game, but it seems to lack the depth and vibrancy you get with hicolour modes.

All in all, a decent pinball

title, with impressive variety, and excellent replay value. Colour depth complaints the only drawback.

Hendry Saunders



As good as this is, there's still no full screen mode so that you can see the whole table. Ah well...

89%

Category Pinball game
Players 1
Publisher Wildfire Studios/
Pinball Wizards
Price STBA
Rating TBA
Available Now

For Excellent characterisation, graphics and sound, almost unlimited replay value and cool tricky secrets.

Against Only runs in 256 colour modes! Which gives it a slightly pasty appearance compared to other recent titles in a similar vein. If you don't have a 3Dfx, you probably won't notice though.

Need P100, Win95, 16 MB RAM

Want P133



PINBALL WIZARDS
Invites You To
come play with our Balls...
<http://www.pinballwizards.com>



Jedi Knight: MYSTERIES OF THE SITH

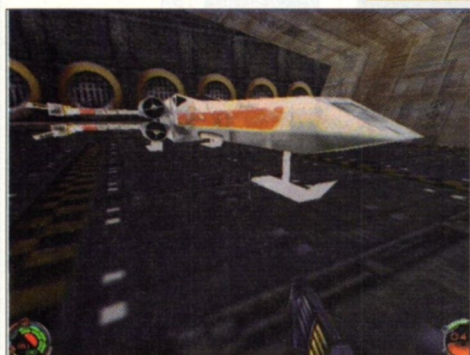
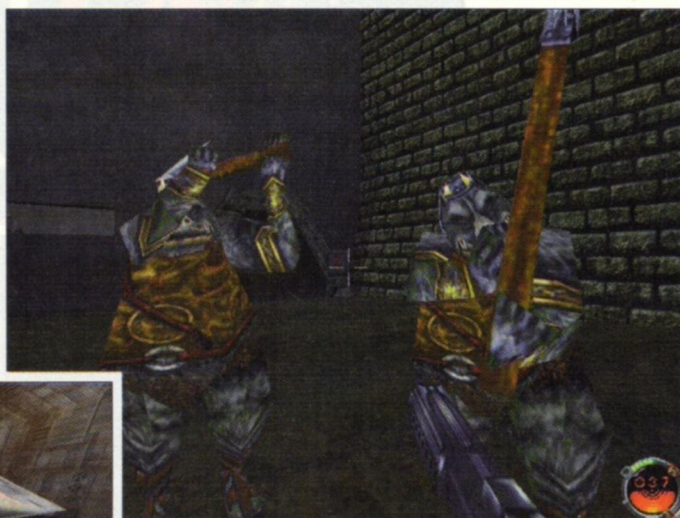
Most impressive. Truly one of the grandest, most fulfilling add-on packs yet released.

MotS is definitely not an acronym for More of the Same. In case you've been living in a lead box, it's the new expansion pack for Jedi Knight and oh so much more. This isn't a case of a new weapon and a token monster with some slapped-together levels, but an extensive re-vamp of a game that was excellent in its own right.

Death and Destruction

10 weapons not enough for you? Have some more then. Take the BlasTech BH-35 Electroscoper for the stormtrooper rifle for example. With this baby you can zoom in on targets miles away and deliver a fast, deadly accurate bolt than downs most smaller enemies in one shot. The rail detonator also has a new arsenal - seeker ammo. That's right, fire them willy nilly and watch them home in on your favourite bad guy. And the nostalgic amongst you can try Han Solo's BlasTech DL-44 Heavy Blaster Pistol on for size and not be disappointed.

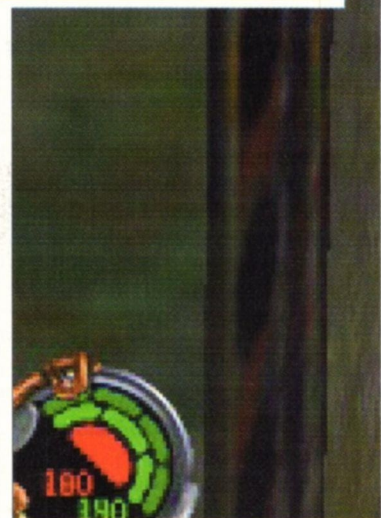
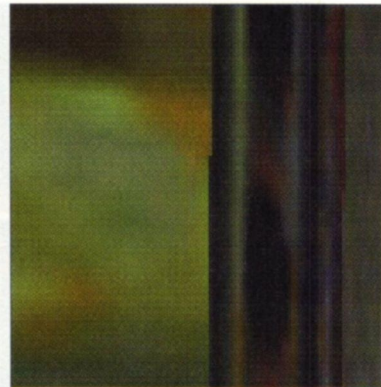
But new weapons are but a



means to an end, and that end is brand new enemies to shoot your new guns at. MotS does not disappoint with 22 new blokes to poke your big stick at! Biker scouts, Imperial Tie Fighter pilots, a hutt (Ka'pa, not Jabba unfortunately), rebel soldiers and heaps more. There's even a Rancor Monster a la Return of the Jedi that can only be defeated by wits alone.



(above) Truly the coolest thing one can do in an action game - deflect laser blasts with your lightsabre



SHHHH! IT'S A SECRET!

Aaaaaaaahhhh! news just at hand - there is a secret level on the MotS CD that lets you play as Luke Skywalker and battle Boba Fett, Dark Kyle and Dark Mara in the city of Bespin and then escape on the Millennium Falcon! This droolworthy piece of info is generously supplied by jediknight.net and I sincerely urge you to jump to their website at <http://www.jediknight.net/> to find out how to get it running.



The enemy AI also appears beefed up. Enemies don't get stuck behind walls or on platforms like in other games, and they won't use explosive weaponry up close (they try to club you with the gun instead). They also puch you if you disarm them with Force Pull, jump off ledges to follow you, and avoid your fire just like a human opponent in deathmatch - they even strafe and jump to make themselves harder to hit!

Immersion

The first few levels of this game brought me closer to feeling like I was in the Star Wars

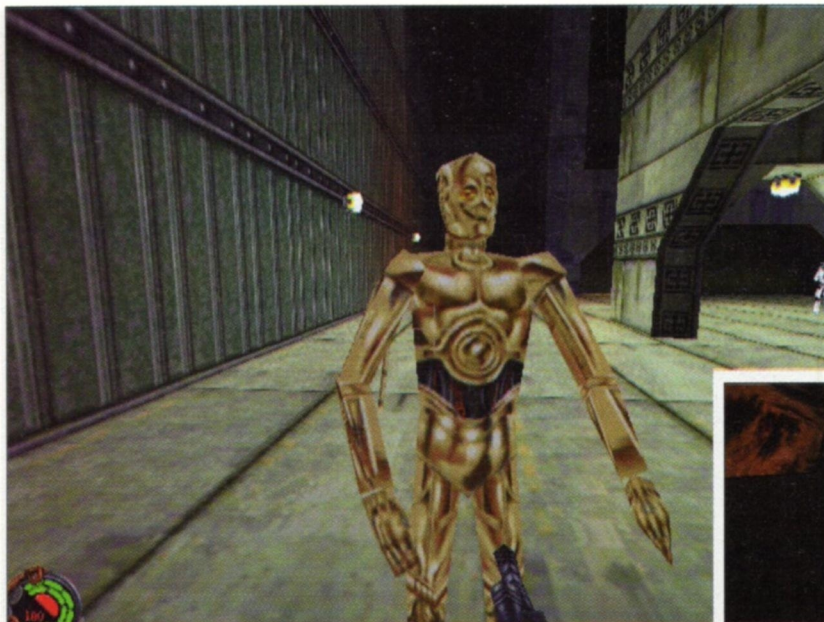
universe, almost more than X-Wing vs Tie Fighter. There's rebel troops running around shooting at stormtroopers rather than just Johnny Rambo Katarn trying to do it all by himself. You actually feel like you're a part of something bigger, as stormtroopers invade the base, rebel troops run around shooting at them and tie fighters and imperial transports scream around overhead.

In fact, the whole game keeps



A variety of character types in Sith lift it above the usual fare. (above) Hey, why the long face? hehehe... Facial texture maps always tend to look a tad funny

you totally immersed as you not only follow the storyline and solve puzzles while shooting at bad guys, but the environment is more interactive. There is a fixed laser cannon on one level where you blow up a tie fighter and tie interceptor parked on a flight deck. There are cameras around most levels that you can use if you find a control room. There are some levels that are almost entire cities and huge starships - a feat that no other 3D engine to date has accomplished.

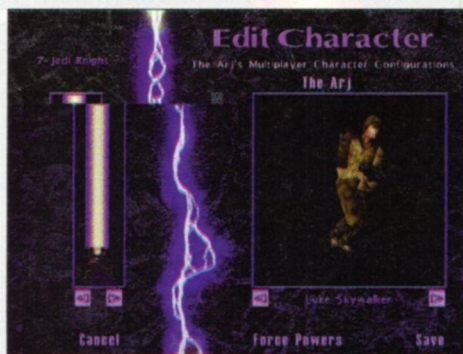


All your favourite friends are back, and if it amused you, you can waste them... we did. Now you can pay back Threepio for being an Ewok god and encouraging the little bastards

I guess I've got to point out the not-so-good stuff otherwise I'd have to give it 100%, and that's a big ask for an add-on :) The cut scenes are no longer FMV but use models from the game which makes them seem more like talking demos. Personally, I preferred FMV as they did it really well in Jedi Knight - the acting was decent and the SPFX were of the standard you'd expect from Lucasarts.

The game engine still suffers from a low poly count in the models compared to other 3D shooters which detracts from the overall aesthetic of the game. The level architecture is also a lot simpler than say, Quake II making it look like a lesser game to the uninitiated. But I'd argue that this is not so; lower polys means you can have heaps more models on the screen at the same time (a platoon of stormtroopers running at you looks way cool) and the simple level architecture means massive levels - many times the size of any other 3D shooter (except maybe Terminator Skynet, but that is a battle for another article). Oh yeah, the stormtroopers have new, dumber noises - making them sound like Butthead, "uh, uh".

Quake suffered from an incurable case of the browns. Jedi Knight had the same problem with grey. Not the case with MotS. Coloured lighting, better light sourcing and more interesting wall patterns = better atmosphere. The MotS engine seems to run a few fps slower than Jedi Knight, but this is probably due to these enhanced features that more than make up for a few lost fps.



Multiplayer

The LEC team have done a hell of a job with this add-on. Not only are there new features, enemies, weapons, levels, characters and so forth, but the multiplayer game has been enhanced way beyond expectations. For starters, there are three new multiplayer character personalities all with their own specific attributes and inventory. You can now choose from Rebel/Imperial soldier, Jedi, Bounty Hunter or Scout. There are also heaps more deathmatch models including Luke and Vader, 19 new deathmatch levels including 4 historic locations like the Imperial Throne Room and the Carbonite

chamber. The only thing missing really is a dedicated server, which is probably why there are hardly any JK/MotS servers online.

If everything you've read above does not make you say 'this sounds like the coolest add-on yet, I need to buy it and

Jedi Knight NOW', then it's time to re-enter the lead box. For those of you that own Jedi Knight, what are you doing still reading this review? You know you want it - get it now, and may the force be with you.

George Argy

PLUS+



MAY THE SCHWARTZ BE WITH YOU



Funky extra stuff, not just big guns. This is what keeps 3D shooters alive

and to a large extent, competing with the great Q-word. Duke 3D and Blood had interactivity and a sense of humour.

Descent had total spatial freedom. Jedi Knight has Force Powers (oh yeah, and it's Star Wars which is a HUUUGE plus).

MotS gives you a few new Force powers to tinker with and be more emperor-like. One of the coolest is saber throw, where you can lob your saber Vader-style at your foe and have it come back to you in perfect condition. Others include Force Push, Chain Lightning, Force Projection and Far Sight.



PC PowerPlay GOLD 93

Category	Action
Players	1-32
Publisher	LucasArts
Price	\$79.95
Rating	MA15+
Available	Now

For Arguably the most immersive Star Wars experience yet. Apart from that, too many to list.

Against Umm, no FMV in the cutscenes. Slightly less FPS than JK.

Need P90, 16MB RAM, 2xCD, Win95, Jedi Knight

Want P166, 32MB RAM, 4xCD, 3D accelerator



DIRECT 3D

Dracula



You are John Hacker, a British Estate Agent who travels to a small village in Transylvania to negotiate the sale of some property in Gibraltar with your client, Count Dracula. Unfortunately you are not aware who Dracula is in reality... the Ancient Lord of Darkness with just one ominous motive... World Domination! He must be stopped at all costs! Suddenly you are confronted with the most diabolical challenge you have ever faced... to kill Count Dracula!

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RATING

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LEGAL CRIME

Just when you thought the RTS well had run dry, Byte Enchanters unveil a new world of possibilities.

Dateline: Monday,
February 18th, 1920.
Lower Eastside Chicago

Growing rumours about a no holds barred bout of violent and bloody gang warfare have been confirmed today, with the slaying of three thugs, allegedly all Tony 'seven times' Mendoza's enforcers, followed shortly afterwards by the alleged revenge murders of five more underworld figures and the destruction of a sports apparel store suspected to be a stronghold of rival mob figure Jimmy 'Icepick' Ianonne. Mendoza, indicted unsuccessfully three times for murder, extortion, and tax evasion has said "There 'aint no gangs around here in Chi-town. I'm a legitimate businessman, and Vinnie Marcello and Jimmie Battaglio were all just good friends of mine. Their deaths have hurt me badly, I'm in pain for their families and children. All good, sweet men who wouldn't hurt a fly". Mendoza is suspected of running an extortion racket on the Lower East Side that Ianonne is attempting to take over by force, which is likely to have provoked the current turf war.

Porn & prostitutes

Legal Crime, as you may have guessed, is an RTS game set in 1920's Chicago, where you take the part of a Mob boss out to control the town's protection, prostitution, money laundering, gambling, and pornography rackets. To do so, you send out your thugs and gunmen to have a bit of a chat with the local store owners and impress upon them just how necessary your protective services are. Most store owners will take one look at the baseball bats your representatives are carrying and hastily agree that they could indeed do with some protection. Others might be a little more reticent, though a quick demonstration of the sort of violence that might visit their store should they continue to resist often changes their minds. Once you have secured the store owners' 'cooperation', you can then

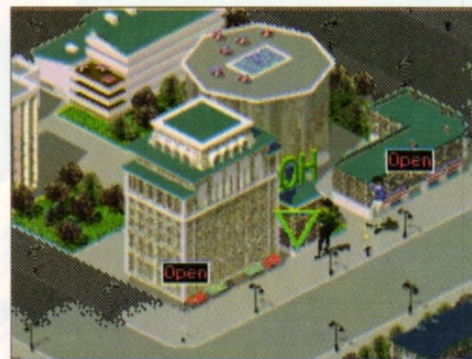
move into their business and help them to renovate their establishment. Sure, they might have been a shoe store before, but with a bit of redecorating, a dab of paint here and there - and hey presto, your new friend is ready to begin his career as a pimp for your prostitutes, or perhaps even his new career as a pornographer, or maybe even a bootlegger. And funnily enough no-one ever seems to complain. The police might pop in for a visit now and then, but as long as you're happy to contribute to the Policeman's Ball fund they don't

tend to stay long. And once you become firm friends with the local constabulary they will appreciate some inside information on the other mob bosses and where their operations are located, and send in the raiding team to get rid of those criminal scumbags.

Fun loving criminals

Yes, it's not a nice sentiment for a game, and neither does it provoke players into random acts of kindness, but Legal Crime is much more of a cartoon styled fun game than a serious sim. It's all real time, and is primarily an internet game where the aim is to

take out rival human mob bosses rather than AI controlled ones. There is a single player mode, but it's explicitly intended as a training mode for enterprising mob dons. The interface, however, is nice and simple, with a Warcraft style click to select and once more to move/attack/guard/etc, and overall the game is a fast paced blend of intimidation, warfare and financial planning. Like, do you make friends with



Perhaps those of Italian descent might find the caricatures of mobsters a little offensive - but it's still a good game





the army people (by giving them lots of money) hoping to get some heavy duty weaponry, or do you contribute to some political funds in the hope of keeping your businesses illegal (thereby allowing you to keep the prices for your 'products' ridiculously high), or do you become friendly with the police (again, by throwing money at them) to keep them away from your businesses and to make them raid your opposition? Everything costs money, and you have to keep the funds rolling in to cover your costs by 'protecting' local businesses and converting them into illegal enterprises. The problem is that there's a mob war going on, with at least one other boss trying to take over the territory, so you can expect gunfights in the streets, bombers trying to bomb your enterprises, and police that will take on whoever pays them the least. It's a nice blend of action and planning that makes for a fun, if not earth shattering game. There are plenty of clans that have sprung up online (called 'Families', funnily enough) and there are always plenty of people to play online through the free server. The only way to purchase the game is through the internet, as with the shareware version (which can only be played multiplayer for 15 minutes), but the good news is that there is a distributor in Australia at www.wantree.com.au/~netpromo/netcrime.htm.



Great value

All up, Net Crime is another RTS game with a fun scenario, and a slightly different way of play to those from the 'build up a base and go on a rampage' ilk. It is

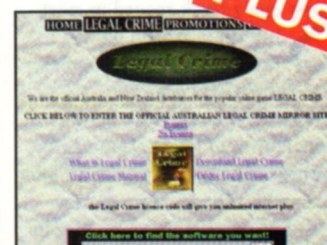
good fun to play, and seems fairly nicely balanced - especially in multiplayer games, which is where it really takes off, and at only \$30 you could do a lot worse.

Gareth Jones



Running short of cash? Just start up a porn racket! Just like real life, really

PLUS+



www.wantree.com.au/~netpromo/netcrime.htm

For the Australian mirror of the game. Plenty of links, a demo version to download, and details on how you can purchase the full version too.

77%

Category Resource managing
Players 1-4
Publisher Byte Enchanters
Price \$30AUD (online registration)
Rating TBA
Available Now

For A nice, simple style of RTS game that carries slightly different methodologies for play. Multiplayer setup is simple and works well.

Against The graphics are nothing to write home about, and the character voices can get a bit annoying after a very short while. The AI for single player games could have been improved a little too.

Need P100, 16MB RAM, sound card, Win '95, 14.4k Modem, ISP.

Want P133, 32MB RAM, 28.8k modem



MANX TT

Oh look, another Sega Arcade/Saturn to PC conversion. Here's another one just like the other ones.

Sega's track record in porting their arcade games to their own home consoles, the Saturn and even the Megadrive, has hardly been something to boast about. Less impressive still is the rate of success when those same games struggle bravely to make it onto the PC. You name them - Sega Rally, Virtua Fighter, Virtua Cop, and let's not forget Daytona - they all simply look out of place on a PC, twitching uncomfortably in their ill-fitting new clothes. Inevitably, as if unwilling to heed the warnings of the past, Manx TT follows in the same tradition.

Know your market

Equally inevitably, then, Manx TT is not a particularly remarkable game. The problem arises, and this is applicable to nearly every Sega release on the PC, through a fundamental misunderstanding of the difference between arcade games and computer games. Perhaps misunderstanding is too kind a word.

How about ignorance? Sheer bloody-mindedness?

All these arcade conversions are based on the same flawed logic. I'm sure Sega must think to themselves, "Hey, Game X has been a big success in the arcades, therefore it must be a great game! We'll just stick it on a PC and sell it by the truckload!"

Wrong, wrong, wrong. When I

walk into that lurid, dazzling, vibrant gaming arcade my expectations of the entertainment ahead is somewhat different, to put it mildly, than when I break open the plastic seal and pull a CD out of its awkwardly constructed cardboard box to play at home. I don't mind if the game I play in the arcade only lasts a five minutes because I've only spent a few dollars for such instant thrills. Yet, when I'm paying 40 times as much for a



embarrassing, while the other doesn't have much to recommend it either. But wait! If you do well enough you can race on two more tracks! Oh, except they're just the same ones - but in reverse. Nice try.

Only two tracks? Hello?

In a token gesture toward us PC gamers, Sega have coughed up a PC Mode. Here, you can even choose which bike you want to race on. Yes, the colour and everything! I can't speak for everyone, but I know that I don't play games just to be patronised like this. But the real killer is that even in PC Mode the timer remains present. And, let me tell you, there is nothing like being in 2nd place (with the race leader and finish line in sight, mind you) when the bloody timer reaches zero to make you never want to play a game ever again.

Shame then, that there's so little here to keep you going, for the game engine really is very nice and the bikes do handle beautifully. Last month, Jet Moto proved that, with some thought, arcade style console racers can work on the PC. If it had a dozen tracks and a decent competition structure, Manx TT would also be a worthwhile game.

David Wildgoose

The bikes handle nicely, and the graphics are quite pretty... but there's only two tracks and they're well below average - to put it nicely

44%

Category	Racing
Players	1-multi (Modem/network)
Publisher	Sega
Price	\$TBA
Rating	G
Available	Now

For Handling feels great. Smart visuals too.

Against There's nothing to the game. Two tracks, too easy, that's it!

Need P90, 16Mb RAM

Want P166 or 3D card



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Manx TT Superbike

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Your eyeballs spin, your sinews ache. The last contact you had with your stomach was 15 laps ago. Arcade quality motorcycle racing is about to hit the PC. It's a near death experience.

Redline Racer



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FIGHTING FORCE

Another pleasingly playable 3D Beat 'em up for the Pepsi Max drinkers out there.



Ka-Crash! The cyclone mesh gate gets demolished as the combi van hurtles through it, before handbrake skidding to an abrupt halt. Four uniformed security punks leap out, advancing on our petite female character with a swaggering gait. As the first two reach combat distance, one unleashes a swing with the stout metal pipe he was carrying. Too slow. A snap kick to the face sends him staggering, followed by a brutal kick to the nuts. He's down, KO'ed and bleeding. Thug No.2 senses an opportunity and steps forward, but our hero pivots neatly on the spot and clobbers the still-airborne combat boot into his head, then stands and delivers a volley of vicious punches into his face and midriff. He cringes, then snaps backwards under a powerful uppercut, limply slapping onto the concrete. And so begins the arcade style carnage that is Fighting Force.

Badass Killer

Fighting Force is fully 3D, with eight distinct directions you can face. In this way it allows for real outnumbering from several directions simultaneously. You basically kill everyone and then do your bad-ass walk into the next stage where you get to kill another thirty or so bad guys. There isn't a whole lot in the way of complex manoeuvres, your responses being typically conditional, i.e. the distance to your opponent. You basically have

the punch, kick and jump keys, along with backpunch/grab. There are combo moves, however. The coolest part about Fighting Force is the destructible terrain. Coke machines, cars, motorbikes, and ornamental plant pots all yield weapons when destroyed, the motorbike having a particularly nasty exhaust pipe which is a real incentive to go and get your tetanus shots. Half the time you come across something new, trash it, and then go "Cool! I can use that to kill people!"

Details Schmetails

Oh yeah, and the story involves tracking down and beating to death Dr Zeng, who is an extreme cultist who was annoyed that the year 2000 did not bring Armageddon as he predicted, so he's proving himself right by making it happen. You can play as four characters, each with their own special attacks: Mace Daniels (a female private investigator), Alana McKendrick (a Raver girl who was experimented on by the evil Doc), Smasher Jackson (a convicted murderer and 3 ton gorilla) and Hawk Manson (a freedom fighter good guy).

The amount of weapons you can use is just staggering, truckloads of pistols, fire axes, baseball bats, bricks, bazookas, shotguns, knives, grenades, exhaust pipes, the list goes on. The game also has some cool things like getting run over by motorbikes,



and shot at from helicopters and action movie stuff like that.

Despite all this carnage, there is no blood, no real gore or death depicted. The "spent" enemies flicker and disappear, so it's OK that you tried to rip their head off. They aren't really dying (Not). Fighting Force has Seven levels, with twenty five action packed stages taking place (among others) in a train, a shopping centre, a penthouse boardroom and a train. These levels are also non-linear (i.e. you can pick your path between them).

It's a rollicking good beat em up game, which is very satisfying to play and vent aggression with, although its lack of combat complexity will disappoint hardcore fighting game fans.

Hendry Saunders



70%

Category Roaming 3D beat-em-up
Players 1-2 Cooperative
Publisher Core Design
Price STBA
Rating MA15+
Available Now

For It's really easy to play, is satisfying, has the coolest destructible environment and is just plain fun.

Against Has crappy camera angles which often obscure the action, it's too simplistic and you can only fight four foes at once. It requires a 3D accelerator to operate, even though the lack of 3D special effects might disappoint enthusiasts.

Need Pentium compatible processor, 3D graphics accelerator card

Want P166, 32Mb RAM

3D MOST ACCELERATORS THROUGH DIRECT3D



Monster

3D graphics!

Monster

3D sound!

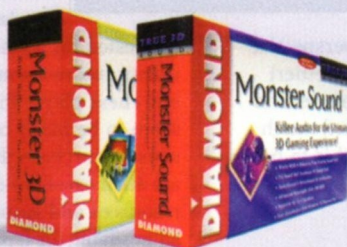
(PC gaming
will never
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USCF CHESS

If it weren't for computer games, many hardcore strategy gamers would be hardcore chess addicts. Maybe many already are, if that's you, look here.

Depending on whom you listen to, Chess has been around in one form or another since the ancient Egyptians in around 2000 B.C. - though the game in its modern form has been around since around 1100 A.D., and was directly derived from an Indian game called 'Ashtapada'. That a game has survived for so long attests to the pure enjoyment of pitching your mind against an adversary through the medium of the board and its pieces. Sure, we have advanced to the stage where it is possible to program a computer to formulate a strategy to beat any human player anywhere by mapping out every single move possible from any given scenario, but the allure of chess remains strong for countless millions of people worldwide. Once you begin to play, as long as you understand the general rules regarding how the pieces move, chess presents an immediately involving and cerebrally taxing game where the aim is just as much to improve your playing style as it is to conquer your opponent - be they made of silicon or flesh.

Beginner friendly

However, apart from other chess program packages to compete against, USCF chess also has to compete with the online versions of chess, full of player ladders, information, tutorials, and a host of real people to play against - all for free. So what does it have to offer to tempt you to part with your hard earned dollars? Well, it is the only computerised chess game officially endorsed by the United States Chess Federation, and can be used to receive an official national rating for an actual (US) tournament just in case you were about to jet over to the states, which isn't of course all that much of a fantastic feature for most of us. However, the tutorial

section is comprehensive, well laid out, and helpful, and is useful to instruct both beginners who aren't even familiar with which pieces do what as well as helping to develop tactical strength in those with more experience at the game. The layout of the board and the various counters (move histories, lists of captured pieces, etc) is nicely done, there are a number of options for the design of the chess pieces, such as an Egyptian, Gothic, or Arabian look. There is also an option to view the board in either 2D or



3D, though the 3D perspective (whilst being much prettier) makes viewing the pieces and the layout of the board much harder and I found this to be too much of an inconvenience to be of much use.

You may never win!

As for the AI opposition, there is a decent variety of AI competence settings although they do seem to tend to lean towards the higher levels. I found the lowest setting, novice, to be all too easy (though just about right for beginners) and the next level up to be too much for me, and the one after that nigh impossible. Admittedly, I'm not all a great chess player, but I would consider myself to be somewhere around 'average' - and maybe a few more levels of AI ability around here would have been nice. This (along with the USCF endorsement and naming rights) would seem to indicate that this package is aimed more towards



those already proficient at the game, especially those that compete even at a local level. Even so, I liked the layout, the manual is excellent (it includes a nice brief on some of the worlds top players along with some of their games for you to replay), and there are enough options for play to keep you

interested for a while. However, unless you're a somewhat serious chess player there doesn't seem to be many compelling reasons to purchase this when there are such excellent chess resources and games on the web, all available for free.

Gareth Jones

The beauty of chess is that while it's relatively easy to learn, you'll never, ever, master it

71%

Category Chess
Players 1-2 (modem, network, hotseat)
Publisher Interplay
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Nicely presented, good variety of options, multi-playable, and the tutorial and manual are very helpful and well done.

Against Maybe a geared a little far towards the already accomplished player in terms of AI opposition, and can rate players for the American national rating system... which doesn't mean much to most of us.

Need P90, Win '95, 16MB RAM

Want That'll do

PLUS+



<http://www.chess.ibm.com/home/html/b.html>
IBM's Deep Blue vs. Kasparov page. Fellow humans, we have just dropped a notch in the food chain...

SEGA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

We like Sega! Honest we do, they do some good games. However, they also do some not so good stuff. And occasionally they do games as bad as Sega Touring Car Championship. Sad, really.

By now, no doubt, you're all under the impression that I hate Sega. You probably think they must have done something nasty to me. Maybe they haven't sent me the correct promotional goodies. Or perhaps they did something to my pet cat involving a pizza cutter and several tight elastic bands. But it's not true. I just keep getting sent all their crap games, that's all.

If I'd been asked to cast my critical gaze over a PC version of Virtua Fighter 2 or Nights or one of their wonderful Japanese RPGs, I would proceed to gush forth all manner of praise and even go so far as to entertain the idea of tagging a Powerplay Gold Award onto the glowing review. Unfortunately, all I ended up with was Sega Touring Car Championship. And it is terrible. By that I don't mean that STCC is an "average" game, or even a "substandard" one. It's not "mediocre" and it's certainly not "poor". It is terrible.

But there are some nice bits

First, though, the good bits. Unlike Manx TT (also reviewed this issue), STCC is at least in possession of more than two tracks. It also features a garage, so you can play around with gear ratios, handling and suspension settings. Which is nice.

Another plus comes with the



way the competition has been organised. You begin with a qualifying lap on the first track to determine your starting position. To progress to the next race you just need to finish within the time limit, instead of being required to place in the top three or something. Thankfully, the timer will only run out if you're doing pretty badly (again, unlike Manx TT). Then, where you finish in the first race is where you start the next one, and so on through all the circuits in the championship.

None of this matters an inch. Any chance STCC had of delivering even a half-decent, sort of alright-ish racing game is blown away by two things. The driving model stinks. You can race nearly every track and not raise your middle finger from the accelerate key, while the digits either side occasionally tap left or right. Possibly the tracks would be quite tricky if the cars handled decently, like they do in TOCA Tourers. But they don't, so who cares?



Any possibility of this being a decent game ends with the terrible driving model and the absolutely awful graphics. Now, if only we could see Sega's arcade beauty Scud Race on our home PC...

that crowd! On second thoughts, don't, you might well feel physically ill. It's quite tragic really. Not even 3DFX support could save it.

Sega Touring Car Championship is a better game than Daytona, if only because it's not full of the same graphical glitches that made the latter virtually unplayable. Yet I still defy anyone to be entertained by it for longer than it took me to run the Uninstall program.

David Wildgoose

Great uninstall program though!

Comparisons with TOCA are utterly pointless, however. There's just no way to consider the two games within any meaningful parameters. This is most apparent when you take a look at the graphics. Maybe it's the idealist in me, but I had genuinely started to believe that, with the aid of 3D accelerator cards, we had seen the end of really bad graphics in games. Sega have well and truly put an end to such naivety. STCC is awful. Look at the cars! Look at



29%

Category Racing
Players 1-8 (network, splitscreen)
Publisher Sega
Price \$TBA
Rating G
Available Now

For Some vague semblance of long term value.

Against Terrible driving model and feeble graphics. No 3D support.

Need Pentium, 16Mb RAM

Want P166

Beat the House 2

CATEGORY Gambling

PLAYERS 1-4

PUBLISHER Interplay

PRICE STBA

RATING G8+

AVAILABLE Now

NEED P60, 16Mb RAM, WIN95.

WANT Nothing special.

overall
76%

Plain looking, but lots of stats and on the fly gambling advice for those interested in the mechanics of gambling.

Interplay are aiming Beat The House 2 as a serious less flashy piece for those looking at casinos with a ravenous look in their eye. That's right, no skimpy dressed waitresses beckoning you towards the Blackjack table, or zany cartoon characters as fellow gamblers. They've even got a Ph.D. mathematician making sure the gameplay mimics real life odds, and have included a "101 ways to beat the casino" style manual written by an expert gambler who knows his stuff.

While instruction manuals don't usually rate too much of a mention in reviews, this 120 pager is a gambler's dream. Everything from advice on scoring freebie cigars (whoohoo!) to spotting and taking advantage of faulty Roulette Wheels. Most of the tips center around calculating the odds so as to minimise becoming a mug for the casino's profits. Interesting, but the info is slanted at times towards American casinos so it's not a complete guide in how to be booted out of our local establishments for being too successful.



The game itself takes the usual format of starting up a player's account and testing your luck with the aim of a heavier wallet at the end of the session. Blackjack, Craps, Roulette and various Pokie machines are the games on hand but the traditional inclusion of round the table Poker is absent. Included instead is Mini-Baccarat, a curious card game that had me re-reading the playing instructions quite a few times. Poker's sole representation are variations of Video Poker and while that will be appreciated by pub patrons it's no replacement for the real thing.

A well implemented feature is the pop-up advice during the

Pete, if I've told you once I've told you a million times: don't count your money when you're sitting at the table, there'll be time enough for counting when the dealings done



game. Before choosing a specific hand in Video Poker I was informed that over a potential 1000 play of the cards, this hand wasn't that effective. Looks like that William Bertram Ph.D. maths fellow earned his cash as part of the programming team. The only weak points of BTH2 is nil support for online play (although there is a multiplayer hotseat option) and the watered down Poker element that won't satisfy those hoping for a Poker sim. Otherwise it's worth a flutter.

Pete Sharpe

Actua Golf 2

CATEGORY Golf sim

PLAYERS 1-TBA

PUBLISHER Gremlin

PRICE \$79.95

RATING G

AVAILABLE Now

NEED P120, 16MB RAM, Win '95

WANT P166, 32MB RAM, 3D card.

overall
73%

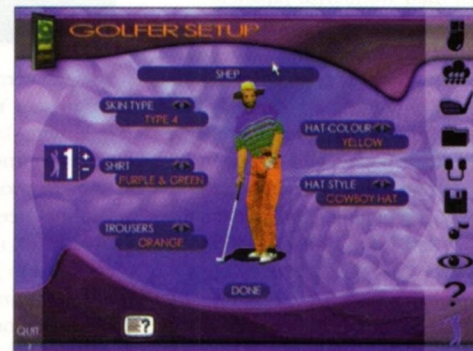
Great graphics, save for the crappy 2d overlays. Great commentary, and decent gameplay, save for some annoying inconsistencies. Multiplayable every which way.

Whether you love or hate the sport, you'd have to admit that golf simulations on the PC are becoming incredibly sophisticated. But is there really all that much difference in the play models between the top games? Not really, but graphics and the physics of the ball are where the subtle differences between the golf sims become apparent. AG2's graphics look fairly stunning, there's a 3Dfx or Power VR2 mode for those blessed with 3D cards, though it still looks very nice in software mode. And because the courses are all mapped in 3D you have complete freedom of movement on the course, with a multitude of camera angles to choose from, as well as a free cam allowing you to walk around anywhere on the course. The physics of the ball seem to be fairly accurate, apart from putting, which is a bit disappointing. Instead of the ball initially travelling quickly, then slowing down once inertia kicks in, it moves at an almost constant speed (though the lie of the green does affect the movement a little). And then there's the swing

menu - with AG2 there are a number of choices for swing methods, from the good old three click, two click, or even a true swing (but this sucks), and though the courses do look fantastic, the 2d overlays of the hold and the power meter are very dodgy indeed - grainy and hard to see without squinting. And rather than use a different power-o-meter for putting, the same type is used, so putting is made all too difficult by forcing you to click extremely fast for simple puts, with little room for error.

Apart from this though, the commentary is wonderful, and it is a fun game to play, just not quite the cream of the crop as far as golf sims are concerned.

Gareth Jones



(top) Having trouble buying clothes in the real world? Try our "Fashion-Sim" and find the combination that fits your look and lifestyle! (below) Successful fashion-makeover-man strikes oil

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The Great Battles of Hannibal

CATEGORY	Strategy
PLAYERS	1-4
PUBLISHER	Interactive Magic
PRICE	STBA
RATING	G8+
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	486 DX100, 16MB RAM, Win95
WANT	Pentium, 32MB RAM

overall

62%

You just may learn something about history if you're willing to sacrifice any semblance of game aesthetics.

Those who played the first game in the series, *The Great Battles of Alexander* will feel right at home with the sequel. Nothing has changed in terms of the interface and game-play, with the main changes being the types of units, leaders and battlegrounds. For those unfamiliar with the way the great battles series works, you choose a side you wish to play - in this case Roman or Carthaginian and start on a battlefield with armies lined up against each other, much like a game of chess. Roman troops are more organised and usually outnumber Carthaginian troops, but the Cartho's have many different types of units that you can use to your advantage. You then have a certain amount of orders per leader that you can use to move troops, attack enemy units, reload, listen to a CD etc. When your turn is up, your opponent takes their turn and does the same. To win a battle though, you don't have to nuke your enemy off the face of the earth. Instead, each army begins with 'rout points' and the object is to deplete



the enemy's rout points by, erm, routing them. This was apparently more important in 200 BC than taking out the enemy's fusion reactor; strange eh?

It all sounds good in theory, but in reality Hannibal sucks marginally less than, say, a good hard kick in the googlies with a steel-capped Doc-marten. For starters, it looks and feels more like an app than a game. Win95-like menus and toolbar, and floating windows with writing in them make you feel like you're using MS Visual

Not very pretty, is it. Look out for "Grey & Brown Windows 2" coming to a PC near you soon...

Basic, but having substantially less fun. The graphics make Win 3.11 games look aesthetically pleasing, and the music....well, let's just say I appreciate the fact that there's a "No music" option.

In case you enjoy this, *The Great Battles of Caesar* is under development. Et tu Brute? Just stab me now, thanks.

George Argy

NBA Action 98

CATEGORY	Sports
PLAYERS	1-2
PUBLISHER	Sega Sports
PRICE	STBA
RATING	G
AVAILABLE	Now
NEED	P100, 16Mb, WIN95 -Ugly 320x200 graphics
WANT	P166, 32Mb -Had to turn off crowd for smooth 640x480 res.

overall

85%

Good stuff, but c'mon Sega get to work on that 3D patch.

It's a tough call for Sega, bringing out a Saturn-based Basketball game out on the PC. Most PC B-Ball fans will go to their local software store and head straight for EA Sports granddaddy title *NBA Live 98*. Sure, *Live 98* is a top game, but EA Sports have also managed to carve out a huge reputation as the kings of PC sports gaming which tends to make them choice number one on name alone. Sega on the other hand are more associated for the past glories of the holy blue hedgehog and being a bit behind the times in implementing 3D hardware acceleration into their PC games. While EA's crown ain't about to slip, Sega have produced a mighty fine basketball game here that even manages to ace the king at times.

Releasing *NBA Action* without 3D support really consigns it to the ugly duckling department, the visuals are firmly behind that of *Live 98*'s glossy graphics engine. Less important is the generally Spartan feel to the game, everything from player's stats to the droll

repetitive commentary is really just functional.

However, functional menus work just as well as glowing ones, complete with fireworks and dancing girls. *NBA Action* succeeds on the court where it counts because it plays so well. A well executed passing game is necessary because the AI defence successfully shuts down quick runups to the hoop, which has always been a weakness in *NBA Live 98*. In fact the AI does everything skilfully from strategic fouling right down to intercepting stray passes. The quality continues with the controls which are precise and implement a welcome feature of standing still shots and running layups being two separate control actions, a good thing for variety in hoop shooting.

Besides the lack of 3D card support, another annoyance is the lack of modem and LAN support. Sucky and a definite hint of Saturn heritage leaking through. These two negatives aside, all else is alive and kicking well in



(top) In a moment of brilliant minimalism, two players distill basketball to its essence - jumping high-fives

NBA action including accurate ball physics, multiple camera angles and full league play with real life players. EA Sports might want to check over their shoulder a bit, they are no longer the only Basketball game in town.

Pete Sharpe



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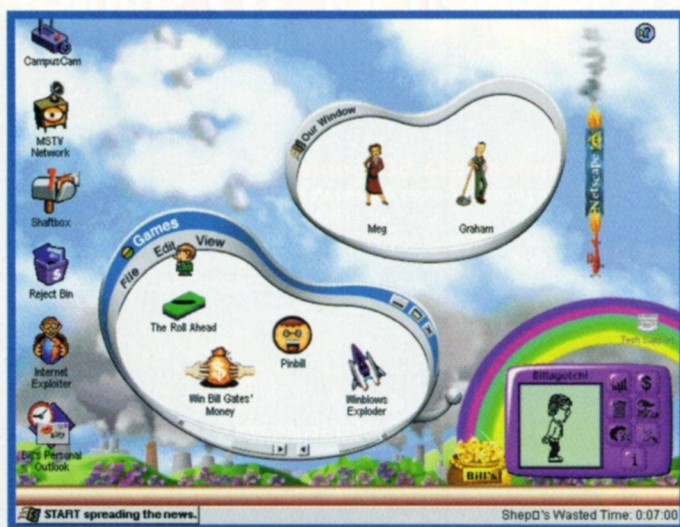
DIVERSIONS

FUN TO HAVE WHEN YOU'RE NOT PLAYING GAMES

MICROSHAFT WINBLOWS '98

Parrot Interactive/GTI \$19.95

SIMPLE FUN FOR THE EASILY AMUSED



Last month we brought you the news about a couple of other Parrot Interactive titles, the X Fools and Star Warped, and this month we've got the one everyone has been waiting for - their parody of Microsoft's Operating System. As with the other two, it's a good idea that could have been funny and biting, but ended up being much more funny to visualise than to actually play. If I said that part of the Winblows '98 package was a desktop tamagotchi rip off, featuring the evil Bill himself (called Billagotchi), which required 'feeding' him money to keep him happy, you might be

inclined to chortle at the idea. Or perhaps the MSNTV thingy, where you get a preview of what Billy might want to put on his TV shows, or even perhaps you'd be inclined to giggle at the accurately named 'Microshaft Internet Exploiter' (which is really a web link). I know we all thought it was pretty funny, just from reading the back of the box. Unfortunately, as with most Parrot products, the entertainment is fleeting, and while there are some parts that are well done and humorous, mostly what it boils down to is nothing more than ten minutes or so of fun before you get bored of the whole

It's an entertaining and humorous premise- that's about it really

experience. But then there's the usual crappy arcade games to keep you busy, like 'Microshaft Exploder' which is nothing more than a very pale imitation of Space Invaders which requires you to shoot down glitches, bugs, and virii. Very funny, and hugely entertaining, indeed. Or the crap

pinball game, with the very funny 'pinbill' title, and well below average ball physics, and just not very much to keep you entertained. My advice is that you'd be best off heading over the Parrot website (www.winblows.com), and having a bit of a giggle at the humorous ideas for Winblows '98 - if you see the actual product in performance, your opinion is going to go rapidly downhill. But maybe that's part of the parody itself?

HINTS UNLIMITED Beyond Technology \$29.95 CAN'T GET ENOUGH X-FILES?

We're not really sure about the ethics involved here. Not that there's anything wrong with checking out some hints, tips, cheats or editor utilities if you so choose, but we're more worried about the ethics involved with the actual distribution of this product. It's no crime of the century, certainly, but still it seems a little mercenary to take newsgroup postings about hints and tips and simply cut and paste them into a CD, complete with email addresses in some cases. However, we'll take it for granted that of course the original posters have given permission for their work to be used for someone else's profit and move along, shall we?

And that aside, if you do want to save yourself some time trawling the newsgroups looking for help for games that you are stuck in, and downloading patch files and 'trainer' utilities (which is just a euphemism for 'game hack files' in many cases), then you could do a lot worse than something like this. It looks like something that a misguided relative might buy for you rather than something you would choose to pay

for yourself, but still it will probably come in handy. And though the menu system is fairly drab and not all the versatile it is functional, and there is plenty of information contained within for about 200-odd games. It will work in either DOS, Windows 3.x and 95, and can be found at most major software retailers. Happy cheating!





MIXMAN STUDIO

Sample Soundhouse

OH MY GOD IT'S THE FUNKY HOME-DJ CD. PUMP IT UP, HOMEBOYS JUST DON'T STOP...

Whichever kind of night club you go to, be it a laid back jazz club, a hard core rave, a house party, a 'hard rockin' club (i.e. the ones where at closing time everyone joins in for a quaint sing along to Khe Sahn whilst vomiting up the 38 bourbon and cokes they've consumed throughout the night). Anyway, whichever mix of music you prefer, any place that uses recorded music rather than live material will almost always have a DJ of some sort, and while it might be going too far to say that they are accorded almost god like status for the night, there is a certain feeling of awe and respect that invariably surrounds them. You might have even imagined yourself as a bit of a DJ, or even a producer of your own material. If so, then this might help you along the way to DJ superstardom.

clicked upon, they will loop that sound. So, essentially what you've got is a set of samples which you either play continuously or add in when you feel the time is right. As you would expect, there are a variety of different sample schemes to choose from, though mostly they are from the genre of electronic music (but just about all the electronic genres are covered). There are



If you like making things go bink bink bink, bop bop bop, boom boom boom, then this is what you're after

big problem. The main problem is that there is only fairly limited muck about-ability with the program. Sure you can load up 16 different sound samples, and even record your own in the form of wav files, but there just not a lot of versatility in there. You can, with a bit of work, construct a decent sounding piece of 'music' and once you get the hang of it, it can be quite a bit of fun to play with, but you probably shouldn't expect to create a #1 dancefloor smash hit in a day or so. Probably the most fun you could have with something like this is in recording your own .wav files (using a microphone into the mic jack of your soundcard, though a microphone isn't included) and then using it in one of your creations. There is scope for adventure here, but unless you have some serious sound record-

ing equipment at home you aren't going to get great quality using this method. And if you've already got some decent sound recording equipment at home, then chances are that this is probably going to be too much of a beginners program for you.

Happily bouncing

Still, the Mixman Studio does have enough going for it to keep you interested, and while it doesn't have quite the versatility of a serious sound mixing studio, there is enough material to keep you happily bouncing along for a good while, and there are more sound schemes to download from www.cia.com.au/ssh too.

Professional toy

The Mixman Studio sits somewhere in between a 'serious almost professional' piece of software and a low grade 'muck about and make funky sounds' kind of thing. The interface is in the form of a mixing table with two turntables, each with 8 buttons. Each of these buttons can be programmed with different sound samples, and then when

a couple that purport to be of the standard rock'n'roll ilk (the scheme called 'Spinal Tap Sings Again' is a standout example), but...well, this is just some vaguely guitar sounding samples with a slower drumbeat. However, if you're going to be interested in something like this, chances are that you're not all that enamoured of death metal sounds, so this shouldn't be a



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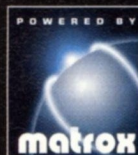
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HOW IT WORKS

Matrox m3D works as a companion upgrade to your existing 2 MB (or more) VGA card. All you have to do is insert it into an available PCI slot in your PCI or AGP system. It's also specially optimized for the Matrox Mystique and Millennium series, and it works with the Matrox Rainbow Runner Studio video editing module. Minimum system requirement is Pentium 133 MHz or compatible. Does not work with Matrox Impression Plus or earlier versions of Matrox graphics cards.



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READERS WRITE...

3DFX COOLING FANS

We purchased the Cardex Dragon 1000 and are experiencing trouble running it. It keeps freezing my machine. I read in the 1998 Yearbook issue of PC Powerplay that a specialised 3Dfx cooling fan is required. Can you provide me with more information on availability, prices etc.

Ben Van Houts

Ben, I'd love to know where in the yearbook we said that a cooling fan is "required". We've made mention of cooling fans for those interested in over clocking their 3Dfx but never stated that it was a must-get.

On the topic of 3Dfx over-clocking however, there is the ability to up the speed of your 3Dfx from 50 to 60Mhz, a 15% increase in the speed of your processor. However this practice is risky because it can overheat the 3Dfx and potentially render the card useless. A group of entrepreneurial folk then decided that putting a fan on the 3Dfx, the same way a fan is put on a Pentium might just do the trick, and they were right. The practice still isn't really accepted by 3Dfx manufacturers but the latest Canopus Pure3D does have a power socket on the actual card for a fan. The best way to get prices for a 3Dfx fan, would be to search the Net.

As for your card not working, the first thing I would suggest you do is to contact the manufacturer, or the dealer, as opposed to a magazine! Any item that locks your computer up or seems to act in a less than "value for money" way should always be taken up with the manufacturer. Could just be something as simple as a dud card.

COMBO CARD CONFUSION

I have a P133 with 16 meg of RAM and was wondering which video card to get. None of the new games I have (Total Annihilation, Dark Reign) work because of a video card failure. I was wondering if the Canopus Pure 3D will run the regular video footage or do I need a 2D/3D Combo card? If so, which one is best? If the 3Dfx cards do run the movies, is the Canopus Pure 3D a good choice for my system? Thank you for your time.

Tim Lewis

No Tim, the 3Dfx range of 3D accelerators do not do 2D primary video. They are secondary devices that work in conjunction with a primary video card such as a Graphics Blaster Extreme, or a Riva 128.

As for video playback that's something that we're very interested in here at 3DTech News. The 3Dfx range of cards can do video playback, but not MPEG 1, or more importantly MPEG 2/DVD. We're still waiting for the Rendition V2200 with its video in and DVD playback capabilities, but thus far having never seen one can't make any comment on it. By all descriptions though, it would be the one to have.

Ultimately however, as I keep on saying, the world needs a 3Dfx, even with a 3D accelerated primary card. The Apocalypse 5D won our best multi card in the Hot Hardware Guide and the Creative Graphics Blaster Extreme is also a very good choice.

ple) or Arcade machine market. However, there's no reason why a "serious" gamer can't have one, it's a standard PCI card that'll work perfectly in any PC.

You may actually have seen an Obsidian board in action already. If you've been near an arcade and seen a game called San Francisco Rush by Atari, it uses the 100SB-4440. With the same card in your PC, there's no reason why you couldn't play that very title on your PC at home. Something worth getting excited about. In fact, the Obsidian

BENCHTEST: OBSIDIAN 100SB-4440 & 100SB-4400

Memory 12-20 MB

Chipset Multiple 3Dfx's featuring:

Perspective correct texture mapping, Sub-pixel and sub-textel positioning, Bilinear and trilinear texture filtering with Level of Detail (LOD) MIP mapping, Texture compositing including detail and projected texture mapping (Single-pass with dual texture processor configurations), Per-pixel fog, smoke, haze effects, Texture morphing and animation. Video texture mapping, Single, double and triple buffering, Gouraud modulated textures, OpenGL compliant alpha blending, Edge based polygonal anti-aliasing (Requires back to front sorting). Support for 13 different texture formats including narrow channel compressed and 8-bit per texel (bpt) colour indexed. NTSC/PAL S-Video and composite RCA output connectors.

Supports leading primary 3D APIs — MS Direct3D, OpenGL(r) and 3Dfx Glide

Price 100SB-4440 \$ 2799.00 (20Mb Memory)

100SB-4400 \$ 1399.00 (12Mb Memory)

Powerbench 3Dfx 117.594

Comparison

Fastest 3Dfx	: Canopus Pure 3D	57.2331
Current Card	: Obsidian 100SB	117.594
Slowest 3Dfx	: Maxi	49.1931

Wow Factor: The Obsidian is the new first place holder at 117.594 and is likely to stay there for a long time!

Ease of Installation:

Difficult
Requires Windows 95 Release 2 (OSR2). Is a full sized PCI card requiring an unobscured slot. (i.e. no processor in the way). Drivers require total removal of any occurrence of previous 3Dfx drivers.

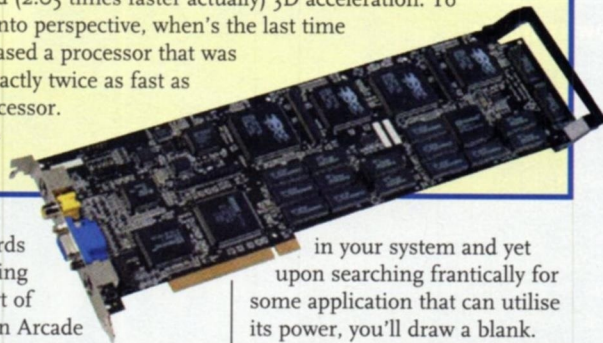
At this point now, there could be 2 reasons why you're having that coronary. You're either looking at the price, or the Powerbench. Those that have followed the progression of the Powerbench know that I stated it would be quite an amazing day when we reached the 100 barrier. Where we've seen slight, small progressions in Powerbench scores with no card really getting a lead greater than 5 points, the Obsidian has come along and literally doubled (2.05 times faster actually) 3D acceleration. To put that into perspective, when's the last time Intel released a processor that was almost exactly twice as fast as it's predecessor.

Answer = never.

100SB boards are now being used as part of Intel's Open Arcade Architecture system. That's to say the Obsidian will be the actual boards used in the Intel coin-op arcade machines.

Using the Obsidian is a most unusual affair, you can feel the raw power of the beast throbbing

in your system and yet upon searching frantically for some application that can utilise its power, you'll draw a blank. Although there have been situations with the Rendition V2100 where applications have performed ludicrously at twice their normal speed, this was because software was detecting the card as a V1000 (first generation Rendition) and the 2100 was



What is the Obsidian?

The Obsidian range of cards are a multiple 3Dfx based accelerator (i.e. more than one 3Dfx processor per card) manufactured in the U.S of A. by Quantum 3D. Like the Voodoo 2, you can use 2 in one machine and double your performance. As you can see from the price (steady now), they're geared for the training (military for exam-

responding twice as fast.

For programmers, this is actually an undesirable effect. You don't want to "time" your software based on a certain chipset or "the most popular current processor". More primitive titles were written like that back in the 286/386 days and if you've ever tried to use them, you'd notice that on a Pentium they ran crazily out of control.

Since the advent of 3D programming however, programmers have been able to augment a means of processing information where applications test the current processor and calculate how fast a result occurs. Based on this "mini-benchmark" a program can calculate how much information a machine configuration can handle. What this ultimately results in with this method of programming is that a 3D title becomes smoother and not faster.

The jerking you would see in the old days of 3D gaming was this programming technique in use. The code would realise that your processor was only capable of displaying every 5th frame for example. In memory every point/vertex of the scene is calculated, but only ever fifth frame was being sent to your monitor, resulting in the jerkiness.

Essentially what I've gone to great lengths to explain here is that the Obsidian isn't actually going to suddenly make your 3Dfx games twice as fast. Instead, if ever a 3Dfx game suffered from some jerkiness (Wipeout 2097 and Formula 1 for example), when running on the Obsidian they'll become unbelievably smooth.

There were some games that allowed us to get an idea of the power of the Obsidian, the first being Quake 2. The Obsidian with all that memory allows a resolution of 800 x 600 WITH Z-BUFFERING. This means that Quake 2, in 3Dfx mode would run at 800 x 600. It was a mesmerising experience. No other 3Dfx card could do this and Quake 2 was running just as fast as when it was in 640 x 480. Wipeout 2097 was another title that ran at 800 x 600 on the Obsidian and even at this higher resolution was smoother than the other 3Dfx's at 640 x 480

(with the exception of the Pure 3D which runs Wipeout 2097 at 640 x 480 perfectly smooth).

The final and most interesting test of the Obsidian was with the Incoming rolling demo that we supplied on the issue 21 cover CD. 3Dfx owners that tried Incoming could be forgiven for hating this title. Designed for the next generation of 3D accelerators it was the first title to send a 3Dfx to its knees. At certain points in the demo, you could hear your 3Dfx groaning as it was pushed to the limits and on screen everything would slow to a crawl and indeed jerk by. With the Obsidian these choke points definitely were faster and never jerked, however you could easily discern slowdowns. We're not putting a lot into this test as it was purely visual and said Incoming demo is just a work in progress release. It still was interesting to note that these choke points still existed on the Obsidian.

The Bottom Line

Overall the Obsidian board is one that is a lot of fun to talk about but with the top 20Mb board costing \$2799.00 isn't really a viable purchase. For that amount of money you can build a second PC with a Pure 3D in it so you and your mates can do some awesome Network gaming. Considering also that there aren't any second generation 3D games to play yet, you're only assuring yourself of ultra smooth gameplay for current titles. Even with the 12Mb version of the card (the 100Sb 4400) at \$1400, the Pure 3D at a fraction of these prices also offers ultra smooth 3D acceleration on current titles.

The other factor to consider is that the Voodoo 2 is due soon and rumoured to be twice as fast as the current Voodoo chipset. Next generation 3D games won't even be available until the release of the Voodoo 2 and then of course you'd have to ask why you'd want an older Voodoo based card (which the Obsidian is).

This is the one for those with money to burn.

BENCHTEST: OBSIDIAN 50SB-4440

Memory 12MB

Chipset Multiple 3Dfx's featuring:

Perspective correct texture mapping, Sub-pixel and sub-textel positioning, Bilinear and trilinear texture filtering with Level of Detail (LOD) MIP mapping, Texture compositing including detail and projected texture mapping (Single-pass with dual texture processor configurations), Per-pixel fog, smoke, haze effects, Texture morphing and animation. Video texture mapping, Single, double and triple buffering, Gouraud modulated textures, OpenGL compliant alpha blending, Edge based polygonal anti-aliasing (Requires back to front sorting). Support for 13 different texture formats including narrow channel compressed and 8-bit per texel (bpt) colour indexed. NTSC/PAL S-Video and composite RCA output connectors.

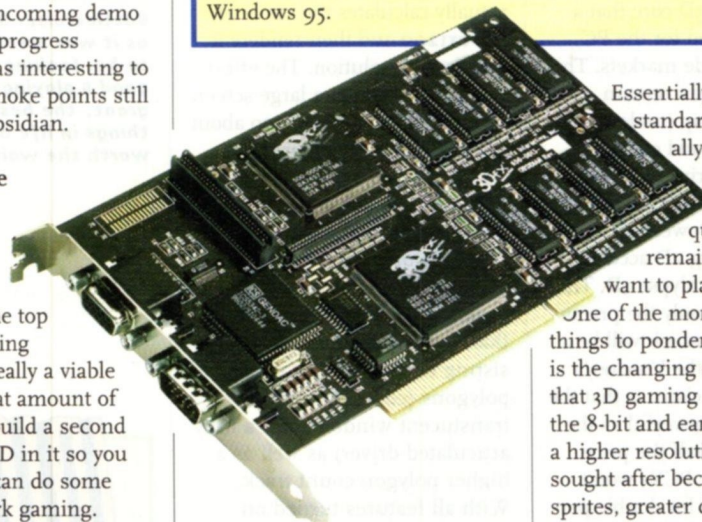
Supports leading primary 3D APIs — MS Direct3D, OpenGL(r) and 3Dfx Glide

Price \$549.00

Powerbench 3Dfx 53.4802

Ease of Installation: Terrible

If there is any kind of problem, the 50SB drivers will totally lock up Windows 95.



Obsidian 50SB

The Obsidian 50 SB at \$549 is the budget version of the 100 series. Essentially, this card is similar in performance to a conventional 3Dfx (despite its low Powerbench) however its redeeming feature is in its ability to deliver Z Buffered acceleration at 800 x 600 in 3Dfx mode.

Performance naturally wasn't as good as the 100 series, but Quake at 800 x 600 on the 50Sb was most definitely very playable though there were occasional moments where it would jerk. Wipeout 2097 at 800 x 600 also performed well with only the occasional noticeable slowdown. However Wipeout 2097 at 640 x 480 the 50SB was as smooth as the Pure 3D.

Essentially the 50SB is a standard 3Dfx that actually allows for play at 800 x 600.

Of course the question still remains whether you want to play at 800 x 600.

One of the more interesting things to ponder with resolution is the changing environment that 3D gaming offers. Back in the 8-bit and early gaming days, a higher resolution was always sought after because when using sprites, greater detail allowed for better looking characters. A sprite after all is a hand painted 2D image that is animated much the same way a cartoon is. Resolution in allowing for this greater details makes a world of difference, compare Ultima Online at 640 x 480 to Ultima 8 at 320 x 200.

With 3D however, even at 640 x 480, we haven't even yet begun to max out the potential of a 3D accelerator. Gouraud shading for example, being a mathematical process, will shade and look virtually the same within the resolutions of 640 x 480 and 800 x 600. The only time we're going to really desire a higher resolution is when we can texture an object at such a high definition that the only limiting factor is the resolution itself. What we

should be aiming for in a 3D accelerator is its ability to render and texture complex objects, i.e. it's processing ability rather than its max resolution.

All comments aside, the 50SB is still a totally worthy 3Dfx and perfect for those that do desire to run games at a higher res, (i.e. most Quakeheads) even at \$800. For the more budget conscious, the Canopus Pure 3D is still best buy.

THE POWER VR3 IS COMING!

I will unashamedly admit that I'm a fan of the Power VR series of accelerators. Unlike every other 3D accelerator out there, NEC weren't constantly chasing the legacy of 3Dfx, but instead opted to create a different and in some aspects better product.

The new PMX (or Highlander) will use a single 3D core that's scaled and tailored for the PC, console and arcade markets. This base core will again remain exceptionally cheap (under \$100US but will add considerably better rendering quality and a five fold increase in 3D performance over the PowerVR2, as well as integrating 2D acceleration like the Apocalypse 5D. The PMX however is only the precursor to the PCX3, which will be a 3D only part like the Voodoo/2.

The latest NEC claim is that the PCX3 will be as powerful as the Voodoo 2 but at half the price. Sadly though, the PCX3 won't offer SLI (2 cards for double performance) which ultimately means a machine with 2 Voodoo 2's will outperform a PCX3.

Still, performance tests of the PVR2 has cranked out 'effective' fill rates of 120 Million pixels per second and sustained real-world rendering rates of more than one million front facing, fully textured, lit and shadowed polygons per second. Peak rates are expected to top four million polygons per second (theoretical) with Pentium II PCs.

Texture offerings from the PCX3 will offer VQ (Vector Quantization) and texture compression will be used to offer around 10:1 compression ratios. What this should mean is that in a board with a 4MB texture buffer (bottom of the line card), could store up to 40MB of textures.

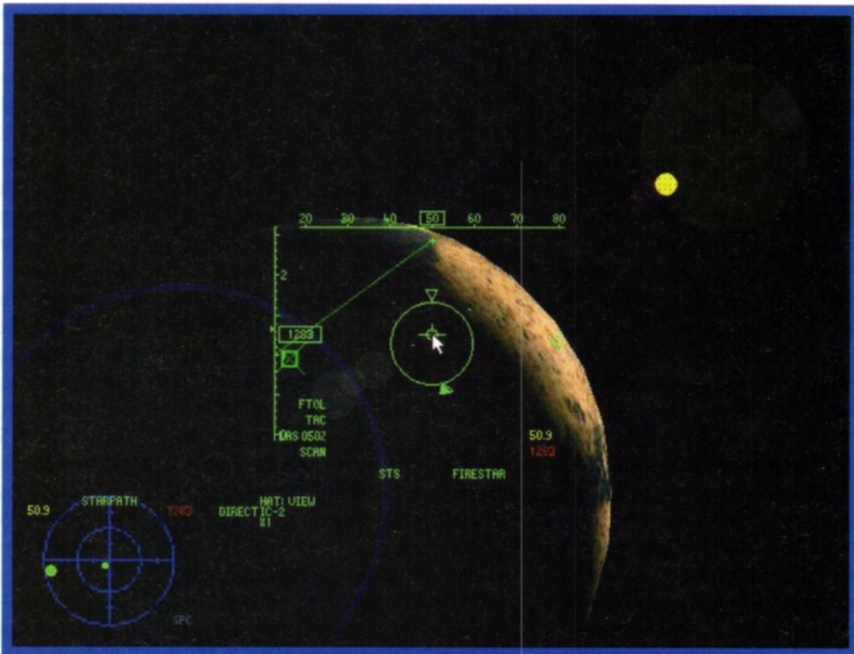
Those lucky enough to see this beast in action reported that the PCX 3's rendering quality is even better than the first Power VR's. Colours are brighter and better saturated and Alpha blending is far better supported. The most amazing display of the PCX 3's ability however was its ability for FULL SCENE anti-aliasing. This is so very exciting because the hardware

actually calculates the scene at 1600x1200 and then renders it at a lower resolution. The effect is similar to taking a large screen shot and then resizing it to about half the size with almost no detail loss. Most importantly, the PCX 3 can do this without ANY framerate drop at all.

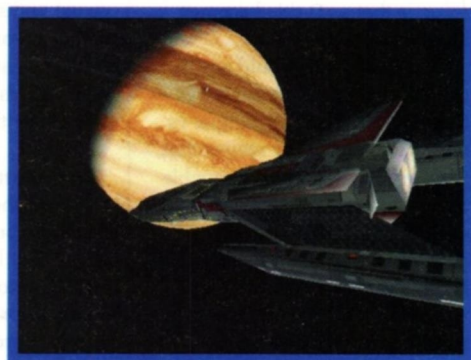
In development now for the PCX 3 is a special version of Kalisto's Ultimate Race Pro that, for starters, uses a car consisting of more than 5,000 polygons (complete with translucent windows and a fully articulated driver) as well as a higher polygon count track. With all features turned on (including full scene anti-aliasing) the demo ran at more than 45 frames per second.

QUICK BYTES

Sorry all, it's just been such a big month for hardware that we only have minimal space for Quick Bytes. This month we received some screenshots of Battle Cruiser 3000 3Dfx. It looks absolutely fantastic, The Battle Cruiser with hardware assisted Perspective Correction looks absolutely beautiful and as you can see from the screenshot, the cruiser around Jupiter looks simply amazing. Obviously the game receives a healthy frame rate increase as well and overall Derek Smart is doggedly living up to his commitment to his game. My hat goes off to him.



Battlecruiser 3000 as it was meant to be. Looking good & playing great, the best things in life are worth the wait.



IDIOT BOX

the easy version

ARE ALL 3D GAMES ACCELERATED WHEN I GET MY NEW 3D ACCELERATOR?

No. In order for a game to take advantage of 3D acceleration, it has to use what is known as an API (Application Programming Interface). These allow the programmer to easily use the added functionality that a 3D accelerator brings. In DOS this is a nightmare, literally meaning that a programmer has to accommodate for each different card and each API. Windows 95 on the other hand is a whole different story.

Windows 95 currently incorporates 2 different types of OS Standard API - called Direct X and of late, OpenGL. These OS API's allow programmers to use common "programming functions" to create their 3D worlds. The OS API then translates this "standard function" into a proprietary function for the 3D accelerator. What this ultimately means is that a game that was programmed using Direct 3D will be accelerated on your card. Currently OpenGL needs to find greater hardware compatibility, but if you have a 3Dfx, you're OpenGL compatible.

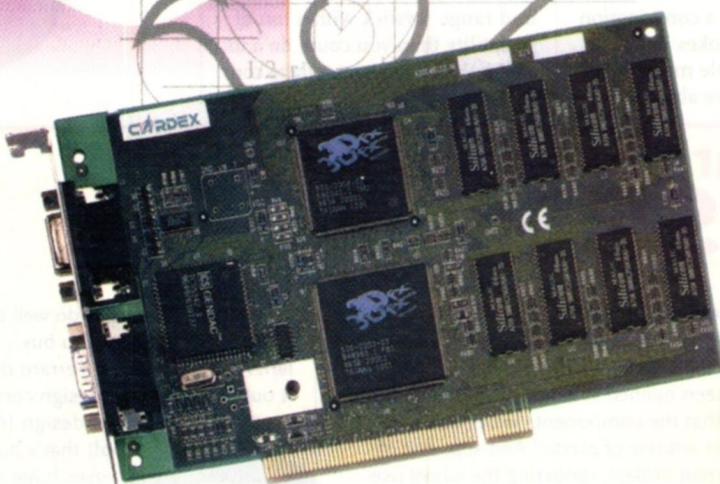
Ultimately, a game that supports "Direct 3D" will be accelerated on all hardware accelerators.

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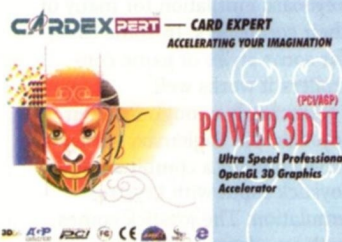
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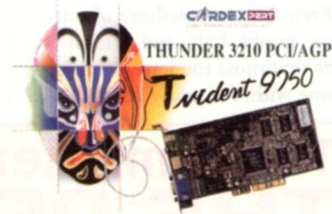
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ACT LABS Powerramp Mite

Act Labs hasn't been around for all that long but they're starting to make some serious waves in the peripheral marketplace because they're pumping out quality products at a very respectable price. However, they are persisting with their policy of using keyboard emulation for many of their controllers. In some cases, for some styles of game controllers it works well. Interestingly enough for their joystick, the Eaglemax, Act Labs have gone for a combination of joystick input with keystroke emulation. The joystick comes with an adaptor that couples both to your gameport as well as an adaptor for the keyboard port. It's an interesting idea, and one that seems to work well for many situations.

Even with the plethora of buttons, knobs, hats, and twiddly bits that most modern joysticks come with, for many games

(especially flight sims) players will still find themselves having to dart their hand over to the keyboard occasionally to

stab for a key. It's a neat idea to find a joystick such as this which comes with 8 buttons at the base of the joystick which can emulate any keystroke, or even a combination of up to ten keystrokes in the form of a recordable macro. The only qualm we have about this is

the placement of the buttons on the stick - they're not that easy to reach. Other than that though, the stick is fairly comfortable even if it does feel a little plasticity, and if you're looking for a mid range joystick with a ton of versatility then you could do a lot worse. Head to www.actlabs.com for more info.



Thrustmaster Nascar Pro Racing Wheel - THE REPRISE

Well, we're sorry to say that we were wrong on two counts. Back in February (#21), we told you about the Nascar Pro racing wheel, and at the time we were quite impressed, so impressed that we had to get one for ourselves. In the original review we liked the look and feel of the wheel itself, but we weren't all that happy with the pedals. Now, after a couple of weeks of testing, we've changed our minds completely. Now, we like the pedals quite a lot, but we hate the wheel itself. Why? Well, the pedals, once they are set up correctly, are wonderfully comfortable and a big advance over the cumbersome T2 pedals. In fact, the Nascar pedals mixed with the T2 wheel makes for a great combination.



All-plastic vs. All-metal

However, at a Lan TOCA party there was a disquieting 'snap!'...and once the wheel case had been opened to our dismay we discovered that the components were made almost entirely of plastic! And yep, one of them had broken, rendering the wheel useless. So Thrustmaster have decided to save a couple of bucks for the Nascar wheel and go with plastic rather than metal. Not that this cost cutting has translated into savings for the customer - at \$350 it's still a comparatively expensive wheel,

and as such we would like to take this opportunity to say that if you have been considering purchasing the Nascar Pro Racing

Wheel then you might do well to consider other options before you buy...like the excellent Advantage1 from Ferraro design - check it out at www.ferrarodesign.com. This is an

all-metal design (Australian tool!) that's bulletproof. It uses huge springs for tension, unlike the octopus straps that Thrustmaster uses - which in some real-life situations we know of, need to be replaced almost



once a month! So there you have it readers. Trust us to update you on other products that fail the test of time.

ACT LABS

Eaglemax Joystick

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A nice mid-range stick, with some handy innovations



WinRadio

No longer do you need to be a radio nut with expensive equipment to receive stations from across the world - WinRadio puts everything in one easy to use package for your PC. We like this one a lot. There have been a couple of radio receivers in the past, but in truth they haven't done a great job of shielding the hardware from the electrical interference generated from a PC. WinRadio doesn't have the same problems - the whole unit is encased for greater protection from interference and our test unit performed well, even though our office is located in the middle of a hotbed of electrical 'noise'. The antenna included is also extremely long - about 10 metres worth, so finding the optimum spot for reception shouldn't be too much of a challenge. The WinRadio software is excellent, it emulates all the functions of professional scanners through an intuitive and functional interface, and even without consulting the hefty and informative interface too much you'll be ready to find weird and wonderful stations from here to Islamabad. And truly, the amount of stations that you can find is really amazing. Along with the usual local stations, you might be able to pick up ships from faraway oceans, monitor air control towers, listen in to NASA frequencies, along with smaller broadcasters from tin pot countries pontificating for or against their respective Governments, and pirate radio stations from all over the world, broadcasting just about everything you can think of. It might sound a bit dinky at first, but there really is a lot of value in something like this, and the system requirements are extremely low too - all

you need is a 386 with 640k of RAM, and a vacant ISA slot. For those nerdy-types who will understand, WinRadio uses a PLL-synthesised, triple conversion, superheterodyne receiver, has a frequency range of 500kHz to 1.3 Ghz, and uses AM, FM-W, FM-N, and SSB modes. Trust us, this is really quite cool, and for more information check out www.winradio.net.au or give Rosetta Laboratories a call on 039 525 5300.

CREATIVE PACIFIC

Blaster GamePad Cobra

RRP \$79.95

Thrice on the box itself, and many times throughout the manual, Creative proclaim the Cobra to be a 16 button device. Well, it ain't. Unless of course, like Creative, you count not only the Select and Start buttons, but also each of the 4 movement directions of the D-Pad. Not even a console kid who'd rather be chewing on this thing than actually using it would be suckered in by such shameless and blatant mis-informing. This is a 10 button pad. There, that's off our chest, onto the product review...

As we've said before, there are some games you can't play without a control pad. Play properly, that is. Any sports sim, for example. In the last 12 months PC Control Pad technology has come along way. We've now got a great range to choose from, and the Cobra is truly of this new generation. It's a digital design - like

just about any new controller, so delivers accurate response and calibration-free operation. The Cobra also has an analogue fallback mode for DOS games too.

The Cobra feels great - thanks both to the small design and great wads of rubber sheathing each 'teat'. The D-Pad is a bit flopsy, it was great with FIFA 98, but a bit too imprecise for fighting game work - but who plays fighting games on a PC anyway?

The funky feature is that you can daisy chain up to 4 Cobras via the auxiliary joystick input on the back, a good thing considering the odds of you wanting to multiply the sort of games this thing is best with.



SAITEK

X36T Throttle

X36F Joystick



Note the mouse controller on the underside - but don't expect to use it

Finally. A good year after the rest of the world, we're now treated to the Saitek range of controllers. These controllers are much needed. Thrustmaster was previously the only option for quality HOTAS systems, but their ancient technology hasn't been updated to meet the needs of the 90's, while their programming interface is the big joke of the games industry.

The Saitek's fit right in between. They look the part, offer the smoothest Win 95 programming interface we've ever seen and are loaded with high-end features. You can pick up both the stick and throttle for \$299, which, while not amazing value, is a good and fair price.

X36 Joystick

Oh what a funny looking joystick this is. Yes, this is the Pepsi Max of joysticks. The macho sabre doodad at the front and the funky flip up thumb button

being cases in point. Both are completely useless, of course. The thumb button cover is pretty damn silly in anyone's language, ordinarily it rests against the little hook that sticks out the top - that's "Safe" mode.

The rest of the story is generally better. The two well positioned 8-way hat switches have excellent movement, very precise. There's the pinky finger switch, which is actually more of a sliding lever, and also a forefinger button tucked behind the head of the stick. Bad ergonomics, but the only real case of it on the stick.

The movement of the stick itself is free flowing and smooth, although there is a

noticeable bump as the stick passes each axis. The tension is adjustable via a screw adjustment in the base.

X36 Throttle

For aesthetics the Saitek rocks, for functionality it mostly rocks. This is a (relatively) budget priced throttle for the new generation of Combat Flight Sims. Where the old Thrustmaster WCS had a simple set of 6 buttons with a 3-way selector switch, the Saitek instead features rotary controls, a mouse pointer and button, a 4-way hat switch plus

built-in rudder controls via a rocker switch behind the main hand-piece.

Unfortunately, the Saitek integrated mouse is useless without a special cable. While the outside of the box proclaims the mouse feature proudly, inside the manual you're finally informed that "most users prefer to use it as a second 4-way hat". Super marketing that.

Despite the silliness of certain aspects of the design, the Saitek feels great in-hand. It isn't going to do much more

than provide throttle usage for older games which can't take advantage of the rotary and mouse controls, but if you're a WCS owner looking to upgrade then the Saitek should be high on your shopping list.

Saitek marketing people to the designers: "I don't care! Just make it weird and funky looking! The kids will love it!"



LATEST GAME SPECIALS



Blade Runner



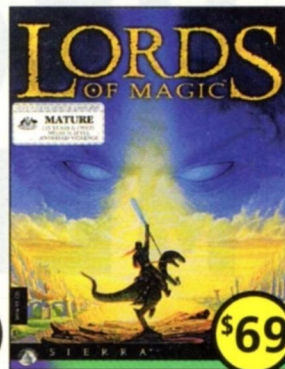
F1 Racing Simulation



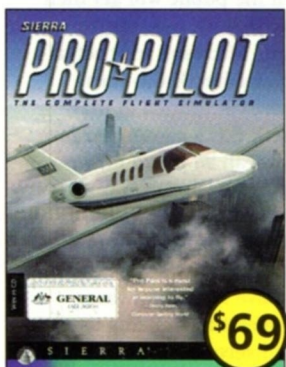
G-Police



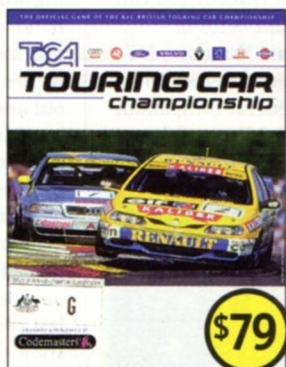
Heavy Gear



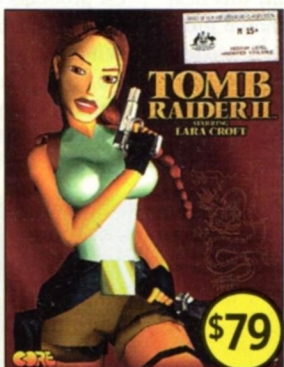
Lords of Magic



Pro Pilot



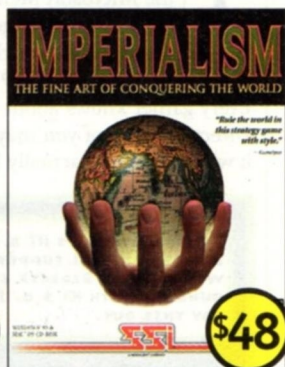
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MICROSOFT MELTDOWN '98

DIRECTX THAT DEVELOPERS LIKE? IMPOSSIBLE! OR IS IT?

At the Microsoft Meltdown forum developers got a glimpse of the much-coveted DirectX 6.0 set of API's. Every gamer knows about DirectX - some of you may hate it while a sad few actually like it!

Only kiddin'! Hopefully this next DirectX incarnation should provide us with some much needed improvements. DirectX 6.0 was previewed to over 900 hardware and software developers. They then got a chance to test their lat-

est products on DirectX 6.0 running on the latest betas of Windows 98 and Windows NT 5.0. This is needed to test driver stability and general compatibility with DirectX. Microsoft hasn't released any information regard-

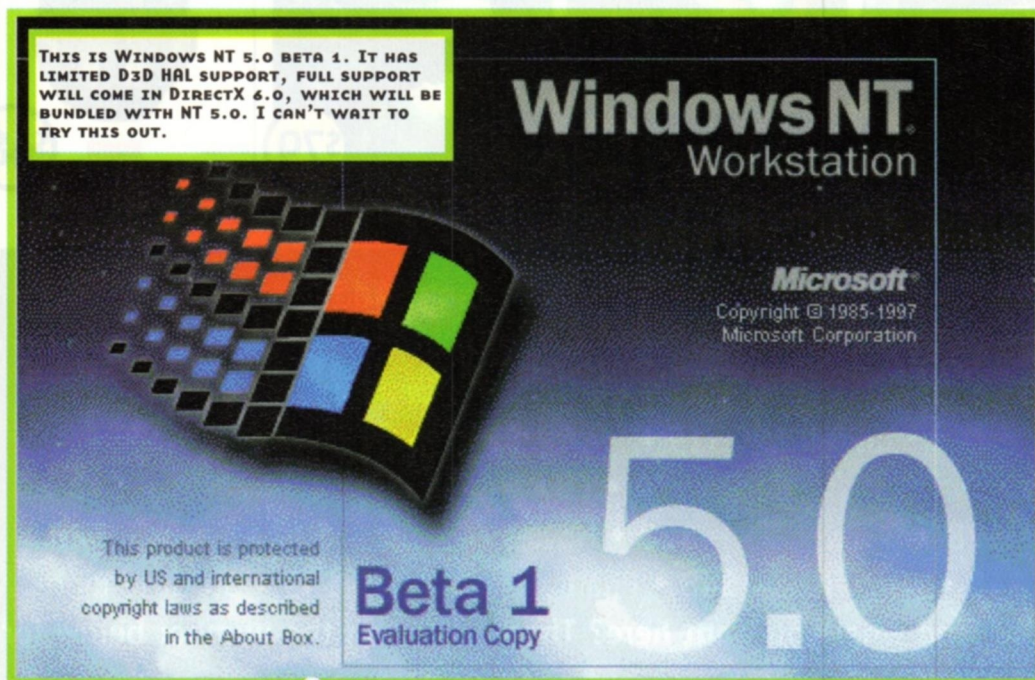
ing when the public will get their hands on DirectX 6.0. Maybe this means Microsoft may actually care how DirectX 6.0 turns out and are committed to making DirectX 6.0 a gaming API that we can all be proud of, we can only hope. DirectX 6.0 will be available for Windows 95, Windows 98 and Windows NT 5.0, although who knows how long we have to wait for these last two operating systems to show themselves?

DIRECTX 6.0

Microsoft has said that DirectX 6.0 will provide greater stability and reliability across all the API's. Let's wait and see whether this is true as it only takes a bad driver to kill a perfectly good API. That said if Microsoft have been really working with the developers on this one it could be what we expected DirectX 5.0 to be, i.e. a worthy API that developers will like to use, and not just have to use.

DIRECT3D

The DirectX3D API has been evolving for quite some time



THE bleeding edge

TECHNOMANCER

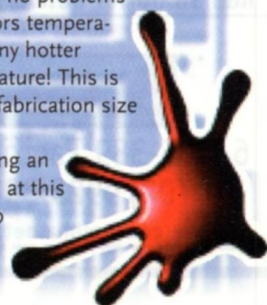
Welcome to the Bleeding edge. This is a new section to the Tech.txt column with the aim of providing you gamers with the news about the latest and greatest in the computer industry. The sort of hardware and software that one day might find its way in to your computer system, making those games really fly. It is a known fact that the computer

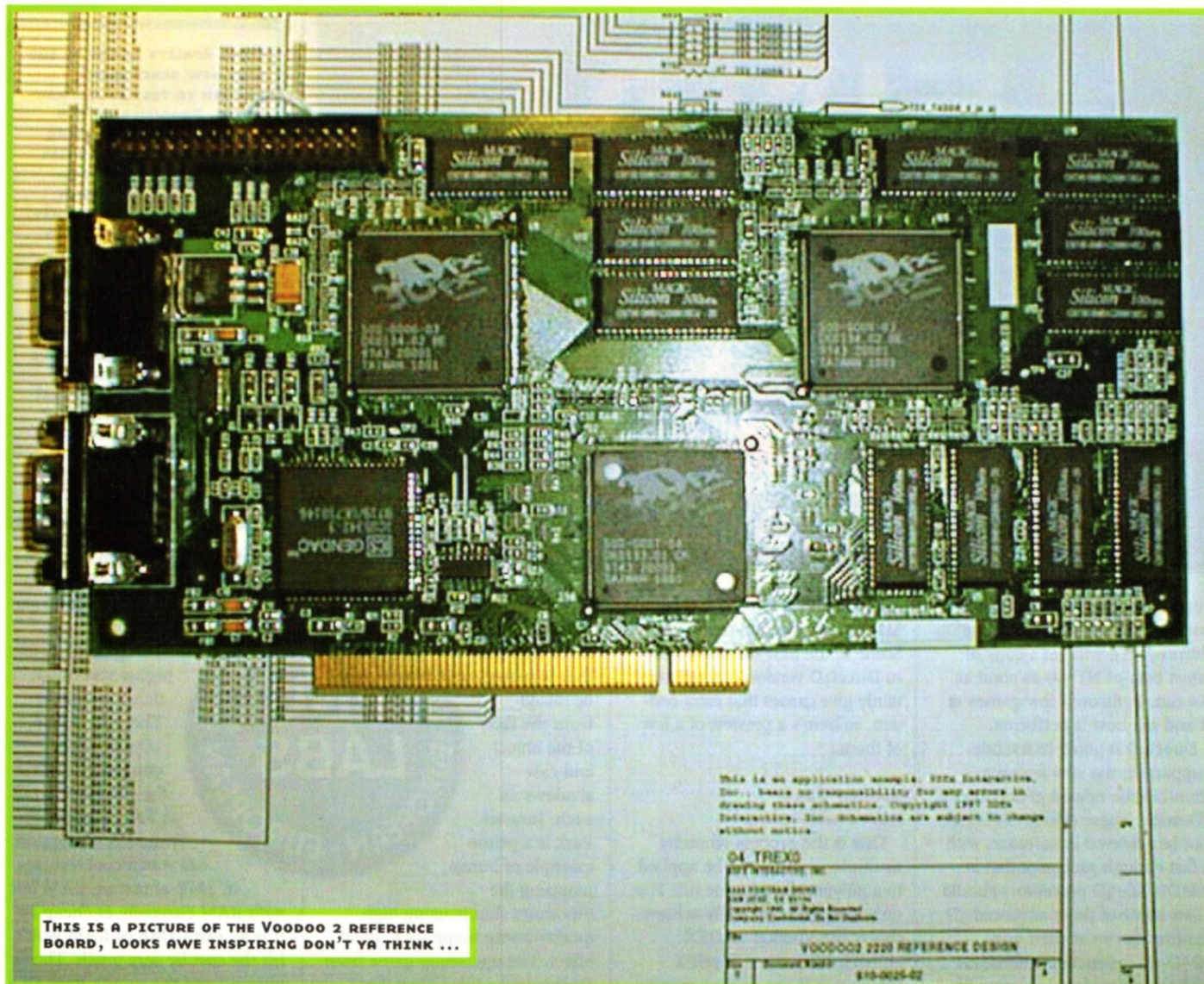
industry changes as fast as light so this section of Tech.txt will try to keep you up there in the know. Well, let's get this show on the road by starting with some juicy information regarding Intel's latest babies.

THE .25 MICRON WAY

As you may have heard Intel released their first in a long line of Pentium II's built using their state of the art 0.25-micron fabrication plant. The first off the ranks was the Pentium II 333MHz "Deschute" which should be available in Australia by the time this issue hits the streets. The strange thing is that just before the actual release on the 26th of January Deschute chips had already made their way to some of the great hardware benchmarks.

Dan Chadwick of www.tweakit.com has been pushing this little baby as hard as he can. He has already managed to get his 333MHz Deschute as high as 460MHz (83.3MHz x 5.5) which he admits was slightly unstable. Running the processor at 416MHz (75MHz x 5.5) though causes no problems at all, the processors temperature didn't reach any hotter than room temperature! This is mainly due to the fabrication size reduction to 0.25 microns. Try running an original Pentium II at this speed and the chip would get very hot indeed.





now and hopefully this release should be more of a developer friendly API. I still don't believe it comes anywhere close to OpenGL for ease of programming or scalability though. Microsoft: why can't you allow OpenGL support as an option

under DirectX, and let the developers make the choice. When you see what Silicon Graphics have done with this language that can run on anything from a 3DFX all the way up to SGI's own InfiniteReality system (mind blowing 3D performance),

it becomes very easy to see that SGI certainly have the more mature API. That's what SGI have made their name doing, very cool 3D graphics. Oh well, at least D3D will now support some of the cooler features that the next generation of 3D cards will

provide us with, there's also Direct3D HAL support in Windows NT 5.0 (about time too!). Finally Windows NT support for hardware 3D accelerators, when Windows NT 5.0 ships it will be a very attractive gaming platform that shouldn't

350, 400, 450, GOING UP.

Intel has also detailed plans of their next Pentium II Deschute CPU's that will be clocked at 350, 400, and 450MHz. The most important thing here is the fact that these chips will run on the new chipset the 440BX, which supports a system bus speed of 100MHz. Thomas Pabst from www.tomshardware.com has already got his hands on a preview of this rather cool chipset and has benchmarked it for all to see. The 440BX chipset is certainly no slouch I can tell you, it will give those new games a shot in the arm that's for sure. The actual speed increase that is attained from the 440BX chipset is of course due to its 100MHz-system bus speed. The actual overall system speed increase is

not that dramatic. The real benefactor of this chipset will be AGP - with the bus speed increased the main memory transfer rate is upped to 800MB/s. That gives AGP 3D cards ample room for them to stretch their textured muscles. As most PC freaks would have heard me and many others say, AGP using the 440LX chipset or even a socket 7 AGP variant are at the moment stifled by a 66MHz system bus. A 66MHz-system bus only allows a transfer rate of 528MB/s to and from main memory. This memory bandwidth has to be shared with the other memory bus using devices like your CPU. The CPU in your system can quite happily suck up a huge slab of this bandwidth especially when playing 3D games. The 440BX with its 100MHz-bus

speed should provide enough bandwidth for both the CPU and AGP cards to exist happily together, providing very high-resolution textures in 3D games when 3D accelerator manufacturers provide more support for AGP DIME. The 440BX chipset should be available by the time you read this or not long after.

JUNIOR CHIPSETS

Intel has also detailed plans of their other chipsets to come including their new slot-2 design. Slot-2 will be BIG. Because Slot-2 Pentium II's will have the ability to support 2MB of Level 2 cache that can run at processor speed. The actual SEC cartridge will have to be twice as tall as its predecessor. Check out our artist's impression of the size of a

FINAL REALITY

Final Reality is a co-development by Remedy Entertainment and VNU European Labs.
Final Reality™ is a trademark of VNU Business Publications Ltd.
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come to a grinding halt when some game decides to spit the dummy. We will get a copy of latest beta of NT 5.0 as soon as we can, to throw a few games at it and see how it performs.

Direct3D is going to include support for the new features found in the newest generation of 3D cards. These effects of course can be achieved in software, with a fast enough processor that is. AMD's K6+3D processors should allow some of these advanced 3D features to run as their new AMD-3D instruction extensions and should perform on par with some of the current hardware accelerators. The K6+3D will still need a 3D accelerator for actually getting those polygons drawn onto the screen. The 3D extensions that AMD are including in the K63D will be supported in

DirectX 6.0, as will Centaurs Winchip

extensions and Cyrix's "Cayenne" MMXFP instruction extensions. Some of the new features found in Direct3D version 6.0 will certainly give games that extra realism, so here's a preview of a few of them.

SINGLE-PASS MULTITEXTURING

This is the process whereby multiple textures can be applied to a polygon face in one hit. The only card that can really achieve this is the Voodoo 2 3DFX chipset. With it's 2 TexelfX processors it can apply a texture and apply a transparent texture in the same pass, meaning massive performance.

BUMP MAPPING

Bump Mapping is very cool and is currently only supported in hardware by the Voodoo 2. Basically it is the process where-

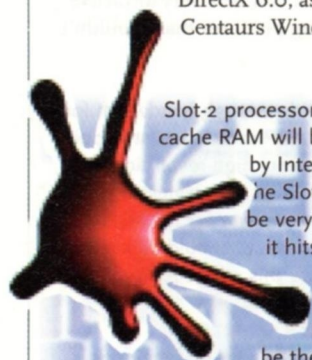
by textures can have three-dimensional relief on them that appear to be raised from the face of the object and cast shadows as such. Jurassic Park is a prime example of bump mapping the dinosaurs skin is using high quality bump mapping to great effect. The upcoming game from Dreamworks Interactive that I mentioned a few issues back called "Trespasser" is one game that will use bump mapping as will id in their forth coming Trinity engine powered games. This could mean that it's a Voodoo 2 or an AMD K6+3D or no pretty bump mapping.

TEXTURE COMPRESSION.

FINAL REALITY IS ONE OF THE BEST NEW BENCHMARKS AROUND TO TEST 3D ACCELERATORS. PRODUCED BY VNU EUROPEAN LABS AND USING THE GAME ENGINE FROM MAX PAYNE (THE MUCH ANTICIPATED GAME FROM REMEDY ENTERTAINMENT) CAN REALLY WORK YOUR 3D CARD. THIS IS GREAT FOR SORTING THE BIG PLAYERS FROM THE SMALL FISH, CARDS THAT CAN'T PROVIDE SINGLE-PASS MULTITEXTURING OR TRANSPARENT TEXTURES IN THE FUTURE WILL BENCHMARK A LOT WORSE. FINAL REALITY WILL ALLOW GAMERS TO ACTUALLY GAUGE FOR THEMSELVES WHETHER THE 3D CARD THEY'RE AFTER IS REALLY UP TO SCRATCH OR NOT.

Texture compression is a neat trick that allows 3D cards with less memory to compress their texture maps allowing them to use higher resolution richer textures. There are a few 3D cards that employ this tactic; the nVidia Riva128 is one of them.

Texture compression can mean cool textures in 2MB of texture RAM but with RAM currently as cheap as it is an extra 2MB of RAM won't lift the cost by very much. The output from the nVidia Riva128's compressed textures don't compare to the quality of even the original Voodoo chipset and can be quite nasty looking at times. This maybe only because of the way nVidia's bilinear texture filter works and not the texture compression itself. AGP might also have something to say about

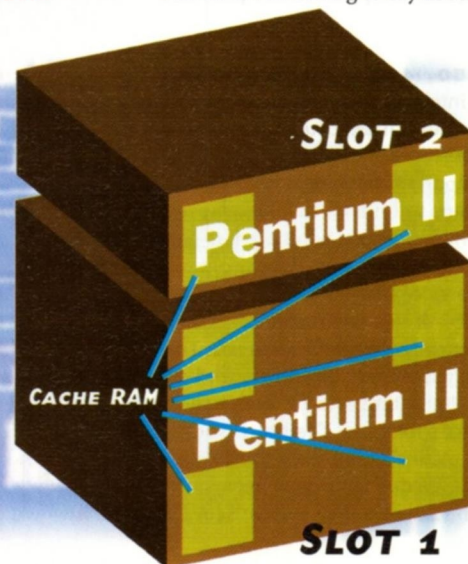


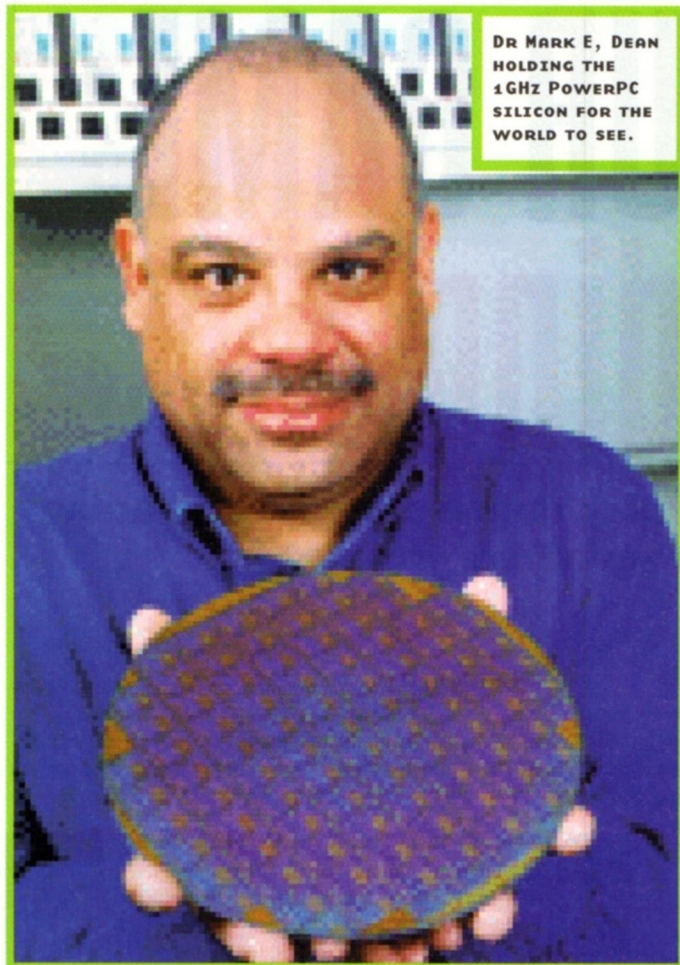
Slot-2 processor. The actual cache RAM will be manufactured by Intel and will mean the Slot-2 Deschute will be very expensive when it hits the streets. The next chipset following closely after the BX will be the 440GX chipset.

The only thing we know about the GX chipset for sure is that it will provide a 2GB total memory capacity instead of the 1GB capacity of the BX. Well thank god for that! Don't know what I would have done if the RAM limit wasn't raised to 2GB, probably still only have a sensible amount of RAM like everyone else!

Joking aside, the GX chipset is also expected to offer more in the way of goodies. Maybe it will provide support for DDR SDRAM and other tomes of power. Later in the second quarter of this year Intel plan to release their cache-less Pentium II processor code-named "Covington" it's official title is rumored to be the Pentium II Junior (Who comes up with these shocking names?) This Pentium II will also require it's own low cost chipset called the 440EX, essentially a 440LX junior (agghh! There's that word again.)

The 440JX (a.k.a. 440BX2) chipset will debut in Q2 of 1999 and will feature an advanced I/O chip called the PIIX6 south bridge I/O controller that will offer support for Firewire devices (massively fast transfer





DR MARK E, DEAN
HOLDING THE
1GHz POWERPC
SILICON FOR THE
WORLD TO SEE.

texture map compression. It provides virtually unlimited texture RAM as system RAM, so why cause slowdown by compressing and decompressing the textures?

DIRECTMUSIC

DirectMusic is a new addition to the DirectX family that will allow game developers to tie mood setting music to certain events in their games. The console market has been doing it for ages, that is, changing the music

in game to reflect the action that's going on around the player. Say you are playing Quake II the music is cranking hardcore most of the time (which can be good, don't get me wrong). On the other hand if Quake II used DirectMusic you could enter what seems to be an empty room and the music would be slow and dramatic (edge of the seat sort of stuff). All of a sudden from out of the nowhere the enemy surrounds you and the music

rates from Firewire hard drives.) Then there is apparently going to be a chipset in 1999 that will support the DRDRAM and will allow 2 Katmai (the MMX2 chip) processors together in 1 SEC cartridge, dual processing MMX2 power.

Intel is really trying to fragment the market into definite segments, which hasn't worked for them in the past. Take the Pentium Pro which was aimed at the server market, but everyone with a desktop PC still wanted one. I believe the same will happen with the Slot-2 Pentium II which I am sure will end up on the desktop of some of the speed freaks out there, I know I certainly want one. Intel have also obviously seen the light and are not going to sit by and see the sub \$1000 PC mar-

ket disappear in front of them. If the Pentium II Junior (Please don't call it this Intel) is priced right then AMD and Cyrix could find themselves with no Socket 7 market anymore and may have to reverse engineer slot-1 or license it from Intel.

THE QUEST FOR 1GHZ

The Big CPU manufacturers have all gotten the 1GHz itch. Digital announced that by the year 2000 it will have the Alpha RISC based CPU running at 1000MHz, as did Intel with their Merced processor. Not long after these announcements IBM showed us what they're made of and have already achieved it! News of an experimental single issue PowerPC based CPU that runs at 1GHz, that's 1 billion

IDIOT BOX

the
friendly
version

DDR SDRAM - Double

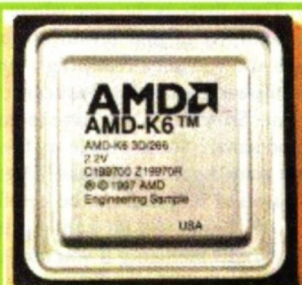
Data Rate Synchronous Dynamic Random Access Memory (Now that's an acronym!) as it's technically known is a special type of DRAM that supports a clock rate double of normal SDRAM. DDR SDRAM uses a technique that AGP uses, that is using both the rise and fall of the clock signal to perform operations thus doubling the speed. DDR SDRAM can effectively support memory bus speeds around 250MHz, imagine a PC with a system bus speed of 250MHz...awesome.

DRDRAM - Direct Rambus Dynamic Random Access Memory, ingenious RAM technology now owned by Intel that will allow massive transfer rates from system memory somewhere in the region of 1.5Gbps - 3.2Gbps. Now that's fast.

HAL - Hardware Abstraction Layer; what allows Direct 3D to access 3D accelerator cards. The HAL provides the interface to communicate to those cool 3D cards that power the latest games. Windows NT 4.0 supports Direct3D only through the HEL (Hardware Emulation Layer) this is the software only based implementation very annoying when Windows NT 4.0 won't use a perfectly good 3DFX card when there's one there. DirectX 6.0 and Windows NT 5.0 will make my Monster 3D card happy.

DIME - Direct Memory Execute, Allows AGP 3D cards to store their textures in system RAM. The Retrieval of textures performed in this fashion can be fast enough to directly copy them into video RAM. Most AGP cards at present do not support this feature and are using AGP only for the increased memory bandwidth it provides (66MHz instead of 33MHz for PCI).

explodes with hard core pumping the airwaves for the blood fest that ensues. This increases the immersion into the gaming world more than you would think and is certainly a welcome addition to DirectX. We will have more information about DirectX 6.0 as soon as we get some, but just with these additions DirectX seems to be maturing into a more than decent API, and it's about time too!



THE AMD K63D PROCESSOR PERFECT FOR INTENSIVE 3D GAMES

cycles per second, was revealed at one of IBM's labs on the 4th of February. The processor actually hit a clock rate of 1100MHz in tests and was developed with IBM's CMOS 6X process, which is currently at a 0.25-micron size. Major re-working of the processor core had to take place to get the chip up to such mind blowing speeds, IBM have said that they will apply this knowledge from this experimental chip to their 0.18 copper process, who knows we may see 1500MHz CPU's by 2001?

Well that's all from The Bleeding edge for this month next month I should have some more juicy new stuff you all to put on your wish to have list.

FINDING YOUR GAME: A Never-Ending Toil

The difference between wanting to play online and actually doing it lies in these neat shareware web searchers you need.

By Rod "Spoonman" Campbell

Multiplayer gaming is definitely a lot of fun - fun that is, once you've started playing. Getting to that Deathmatch can sometimes be one of the hardest things a gamer can experience. Yes DOS junkies, configuring your autoexec.bat has nothing on this! You will always try your nearest server first, mainly because you'll probably know some of the players and because the precious ping shouldn't be too high. Of course, due to Murphy's Law the server is either completely full or totally empty, neither of which is good for your sanity. Then there is the case where you do get on with five of your favourite Quaking buddies and you get a really high ping for some unknown reason. You just can't win at this game. So what do you have to do to get a good game? Some people try the "Hey, do you want a game of Quake?" Messages which fly around ICQ and can be helpful, if, just on the off chance you do want a game, but downright annoying if you don't, you could just hang out at your fave server until someone shows up. You could try some other servers which you know you may get higher ping but at least there might be someone there or you could just give up. Whatever you do though you are not even in the slightest having one tiny bit of fun.

Enter GameSpy

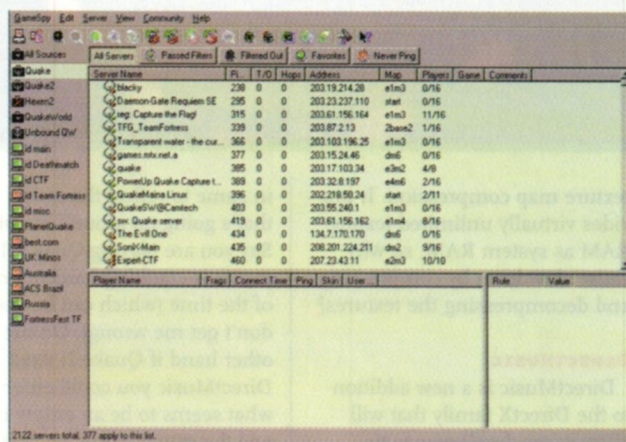
What you need is a utility to "ping" all the servers around the world to let you know who's playing, what scores they're on, and most importantly, what ping you'll get.

GameSpy does all this and more. Setting up GameSpy is easy, the only tough bit could be working out what filters to use and they provide a wizard for that. Filters can be used to cut servers from your list which don't obey a list of criteria you provide. This can be anything from high ping to cheat codes - you can even filter out servers who have people currently on them who have the advantage of a super quick connection, that's what I call user friendly!

The best part about GameSpy is that it's damn powerful, and basic to use at the same time. When you start up GameSpy you must be connected to the net, if you're not it will connect for you. When that's done it will "ping" all the servers which passed your filters, this may take a few minutes depending on how lenient your filters are, (if you set a max ping of 200 it wouldn't take too long) but when that's done you just click on a game and all the info is displayed such as names, frags and even shirt and pants colours of all the players. When you find a game you like just right click on it and select "Launch Game" and you're away, it really is that easy. It's not only for Quake either, there is also support for Quake World, Hexen 2 and most recently

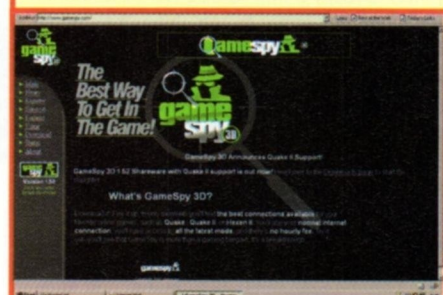
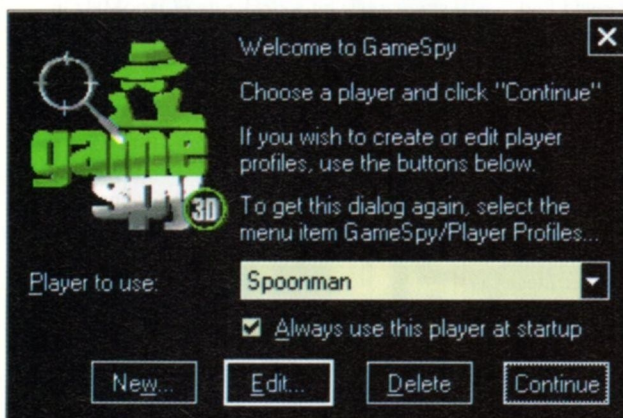
Quake 2, but owning all of these is not necessary to get lots of use out of GameSpy.

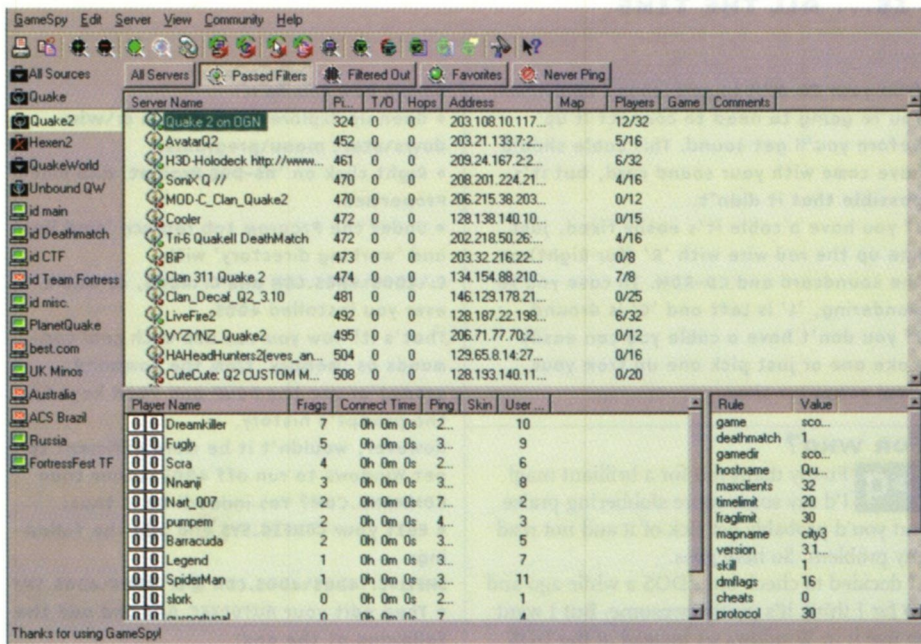
GameSpy's server lists are by no means set in concrete. There are already loads of servers available, including a few in Australia, but



How to:

You can visit either product on the web to check for new releases, find tech support or anything to do with either product. Point your web browser at the aptly named <http://www.gamespy.com> for your GameSpy fix and to the just plain strange address of <http://wasachfault.com/qview.htm> for Qview.



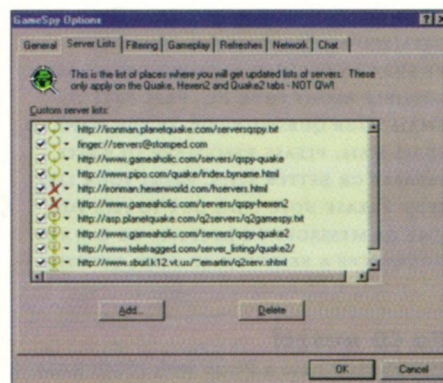
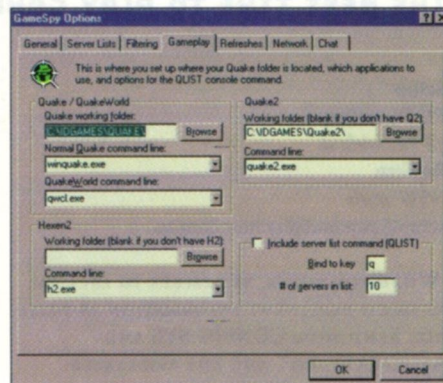


you can add as many as you like to get that local touch. You can also delete those servers in Russia which you'll never go to, the servers which you'll probably get around 12,000 ping on. Another great thing about the server lists is they contain Team Fortress servers. This is fantastic because it means you can find out firstly where the servers are, but more importantly what the popular maps are. And it looks like there will be support for other TCs as well. So what's wrong with GameSpy? Not much, not much at all. Its simplicity is great and it provides just what we were crying out for. It also shows the developers have a little bit of faith in the game playing community by making their product unlimited free Shareware, which means no annoying messages after thirty days and nothing stops working when your

"Evaluation" period runs out. Its faith like this which really compels you to register GameSpy, apart from the fact that you're doing the right thing and repaying that faith, you're also going to get an even better product with more frequent updates and earlier updates than Shareware users.

The Alternatives

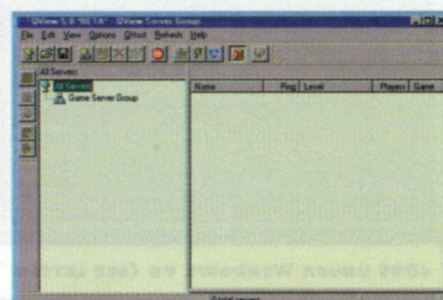
Qview is another program which pings servers for you and works in a similar fashion to GameSpy, except that you need to know a little bit about your PC before you can get it going. GameSpy is basic to install, it's a self extracting .zip, but Qview (the Beta I looked at anyway) comes in two ordinary .zips, one of which has to be extracted in the C:/windows/system directory and one which you can put where ever you want you then



have to create your own shortcut. While all that is easy for anyone with even a little bit of knowledge you just get the feeling that with a little bit more work this product could have been a lot better. This is also evident when you actually get it running. No pre determined server lists! You have to get them yourself. Effectively this limits you to using the servers that you already know, this can be ok, but if you only know a couple of servers you won't be having much fun. When I loaded up GameSpy there were Australian servers I had never even heard of, as well as some New Zealand servers where I got fairly good pings - if I was using Qview I would never know that these servers existed. Once you really take the time to get it cranking Qview is comparable to GameSpy, but it's just a hassle to get to that stage, perhaps in a future release...

The Bottom Line

If you are Quaking you should be spying, that's all there is to it. Funnily enough GameSpy 1.50 and Qview 5.0 Beta both appeared on last month's CD so go and grab 'em off that and see what you think. Now all we need is TA Spy and Dark Reign Spy and we'll be set. Any takers?



THE BEST TIME TO PLAY GAMES IS... ALL THE TIME

Setup
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick st.
Redfern
NSW 2016
setup@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

WHEN YOU WRITE, REMEMBER TO INCLUDE AS MUCH PERTINENT INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE. SEND YOUR CONFIG.SYS AND AUTOEXEC.BAT AND ANY ASSOCIATED *.INI FILES FOR WINDOWS THAT MIGHT TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR PROBLEM. GIVE ME AS DETAILED AN EXPLANATION AS YOU CAN AND BE SURE TO INCLUDE AS MUCH DETAIL AS POSSIBLE ABOUT YOUR PC. FEEL FREE TO EMAIL YOUR QUESTIONS OR, IF YOU WANT TO SNAIL MAIL, PLEASE REMEMBER TO WRITE CLEARLY OR BETTER STILL, PRINT YOUR LETTERS. PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO THE VOLUME OF MESSAGES WE RECEIVE, WE CANNOT GUARANTEE A RESPONSE TO YOUR QUERIES.

No CD music!

>q Hi, I have a P-100 with 16Mb RAM and I am currently running under Windows 95 and I am having trouble running my CD player (music CD's), it works through the earphone jack but it doesn't work through the speakers (Sound Blaster 16). I have an AWE32 Plug and Play sound card. Please help!!!!.

Mick Watts
Canberra

>a To get sound from music CD's in your CD-ROM a small cable from the CD-ROM needs to be connected to the appropriate jack on your sound card. If you open your machine up and you don't see a small cable (normally 2 wires) leading

from your CD-ROM to your sound card then you're going to need to connect it up before you'll get sound. This cable should have come with your sound card, but it's possible that it didn't.

If you have a cable it's easily fixed, just line up the red wire with 'R' (for Right) on the soundcard and CD-ROM. In case you're wondering, 'L' is Left and 'G' is Ground. If you don't have a cable you can easily make one or just pick one up from your local computer shop.

FOR WHO?

>q Firstly thank you for a brilliant mag! I'd say some more slobbering praise but you'd probably get sick of it and not read my problem. So here goes.

I decided to check out 4DOS a while ago and so far I think it's pretty awesome. But I want to use it in Windows 95 instead of the DOS command.com. When I replaced command.com in my C: with 4DOS Windows wouldn't start anymore.

Can I get 4DOS to work in windows or is it a no go?

A truly loyal fan,
Richard
Camden, NSW

>a Yes you can indeed get 4DOS to work in Windows 95, and a good idea it is too.

There's two ways you can do it. One is to just load 4DOS instead of COMMAND.COM when you open a DOS window, which you've probably tried. It works, but it means you're loading two command processors and it's a bit of a waste. The other is to replace COMMAND.COM entirely (which you tried) and boot Windows from 4DOS.

If you haven't tried the first method,

here's how you do it:

- Open up Explorer and skip to `c:\windows\start menu\programs`.
- Right click on 'MS-DOS Prompt' and select Properties.
- Under the Program tab replace 'cmd line' and 'working directory' with `C:\4DOS\4DOS.COM` and `C:\4DOS`, or where ever you installed 4DOS.

That's it! Now you can use such cool commands as 'memory' from the command prompt or use the PGUP and PGDN keys for the prompt's history.

However, wouldn't it be more efficient to get Windows to run off 4DOS rather than COMMAND.COM? Yes indeed! Do it thus:

- EDIT your CONFIG.SYS and add the following:

`SHELL=C:\4DOS\4DOS.COM @C:\4DOS\4DOS.INI`
• Then edit your AUTOEXEC.BAT and add the following at the end:

`c:\windows\win`

Now when you reboot your default command processor will be 4DOS and Windows 95 will boot from it. Take note that the '`@C:\4DOS\4DOS.INI`' tells 4DOS to load the `c:\4dos\4dos.ini` configuration file. If you don't have one, read up on the 4DOS docs and make one. It's just a simple file that allows you to tailor how 4DOS behaves. You can also force 4DOS to use these settings when you open a command prompt by adding '`@C:\4DOS\4DOS.INI`' to the end of your 4DOS.COM line for 'cmd line' under Properties.

WIN95 SUX

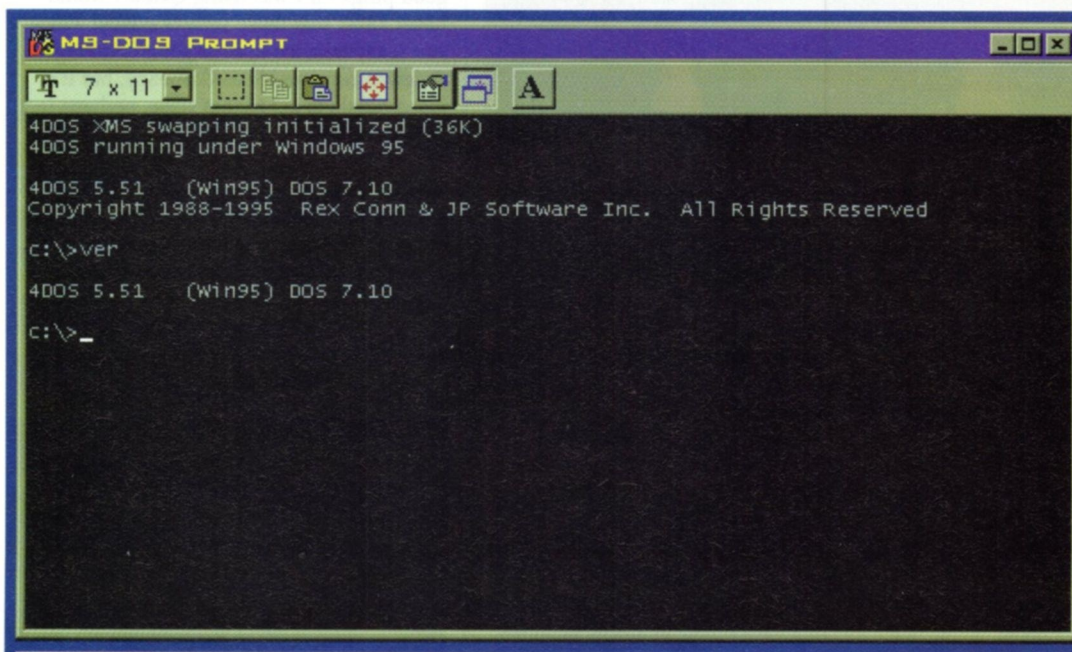
>q I'm really fed up of Windows 95 crashing on me and have heard that Windows NT is much more stable. Thing is, does Windows NT run games as well as

Windows 95? I've heard it doesn't, is this true? Also if I did install Windows NT could I keep Windows 95 as well in case a game doesn't work in NT? If so how do I do it?

Yours

Max
Croydon, NSW

>a NT isn't really a gaming operating system, however Service Pack 3 for NT does add some DirectX features that allow you to play games under NT that require DirectX. This is, however, a limited subset of DirectX features and not many games work under NT. Most non-DirectX games work fine. In fact, GLQuake runs much faster under NT than Windows 95 on my machine. GLQuake uses the Glide drivers from 3Dfx. Although



4DOS UNDER WINDOWS 95 (SEE LETTER 'FOR WHO?')



Glide exists under Windows 95, NT isn't loaded down with a gaming subsystem like DirectX and GLQuake manages to run around five frames per second faster under NT.

Yes it is possible to dual boot Windows 95 and Windows NT — you can do it using any number of boot managers such as Boot Manager from OS/2 and Partition Magic 3, the commercial System Commander and even NT's own boot loader. If you just want to boot only Windows 95 and NT, you may as well use NT's boot loader (it doesn't handle much else). In this situation you just need to install 95 first and then NT. NT will automatically have an option in its boot menu to load 'MS-DOS' which will point to your DOS drive, that being Windows 95.

PC WON'T BOOT

>q I have a question. After I formatted the hard drive on a well and truly bugged computer, I went to load up the CD drivers to load Windows. It said it couldn't read the disk and I couldn't get back to DOS, ("retry, abort, fail" kept coming up). I restarted the computer then I can't go anywhere. I put in a disk with command.com and it didn't read it. Do I need

to get the DOS setup disks from somewhere to go any further? If there is anything else I should know please tell me.

Luke Russell
Internet

>a Please tell me you prepared yourself properly before formatting that drive... Once it's formatted, all the data is gone and it's just not going to boot. The only way you can boot now is with a bootable floppy. COMMAND.COM is not enough, you need to format a floppy with the /S switch to copy the system files across. Alternatively, if you already have a blank floppy just type SYS A: to copy the files across. These two methods are the ONLY way you're going to make a DOS bootable disk and you NEED an already booted machine to type the commands and format the disk!

If you don't have a DOS bootable disk handy, and you can't create one on a pal's machine in the near future, but you DO have your DOS setup disks, by all means re-install DOS onto the machine and you'll at least be able to reboot to your hard drive. From there you can edit your CONFIG.SYS and install any CD-ROM drivers you need so that you can then install Windows 95 on top of DOS.

WHAT CHIPSET?

>q In your PC PowerPlay Hot Hardware Guide in the article about SDRAM you said that "If you have a xX chipset, and the price is right, go SDRAM."

Well the price is right but I'm not sure that I have the xX chipset. What is it and how can I tell if I have it?

I have a 233 MMX on a Octek Rhino 12+ Mainboard, at the moment it is running 2 x 8 MB of 72 pin. The Mainboard manual says it has support for 2 x 168 pin Synchronous DRAM/EDO ram modules.

Any comments or advice would be greatly appreciated. (By the way, the Hardware Guide is the best mag about Hardware that I have ever read - too bad I didn't have it before I bought a 3D Blaster, well I won't make a mistake like that again.)

Thank-you

Glenn

>a There's two ways to find out what chipset you've got. The first is the easiest — just reboot your machine and when the screen flashes up to count your RAM take a look at the long serial number at the bottom of the screen. At the end of it, or near the end, you should see 'TX' or 'FX' or the like. Take note that not all BIOS' flash up their serial numbers — AMI does for sure — so this might not apply to you (it all depends on what BIOS your motherboard manufacturer chose).

The second method to determining your chipset is to just look it up. If you've got the manual handy it'll state in the first few pages what the features of the motherboard are, including the chipset it's using. If the manual has been lost, buried or fed to the dog since you emailed Setup just hop online and go to the manufacturer's Web site, in this case Octek (<http://www.octek.com>) and look up your motherboard model. Again the features and chipset will be listed.

RAM FREE

>q I am just writing to see if you can help me with a few small problems I am having with my PC.

1) The computer doesn't seem to be running as well as it should. It's an Intel i66MMX with 32 MB RAM, which is the ideal setup for Total Annihilation (TA), and yet when I start TA, the intro is jerky, messed up, and basically unwatchable. The actual game seems okay though (Excellent game!). It does stick every now and then, but I take it this is normal?

2) I can't change the volume for the CD! This also drives me crazy in TA, as if I want to hear music, I can't hear the sound effects. (The music's too loud).

3) Another problem is that in Windows 95, I seem to have barely any RAM left! Of my 32 megs, I have about 16 left (when typing 'mem' in a DOS window). This is only in

Windows, as in DOS it seems to be fine. I tried your trick with the vcache from your Random Access paragraph (setting it to min and max file cache and all), but this did not seem to do anything. Is this RAM loss normal for Wines?

This is an upgraded computer (from a P60), so maybe the people who installed everything configured it wrong? Maybe it's just me but it doesn't seem to be that much of an incredible speed increase over the 60mhz one.

Anyway, thanks in advance for your help.

Clayton Breeds

Internet

>a The intro is something that is loaded from the CD and is bound to be jerky if you have an old or slow CD-ROM (and given the machine was upgraded from a P60, this may be the case). By 'messed up' I'm assuming you're referring to the pixelated method Cavedog used to store video, which is common among games today and is quite normal. Don't expect full quality in-game video to be streaming off your CD for some time to come.

There's two ways you can change the CD volume. One is to use your soundcard's mixer program to lower the CD volume. The other is to just lower it in TA. Check the settings.

Your last problem is a problem that plagues 100% of Windows users — it's called Windows. That's the raw deal, Windows 95 is no low-end PC friendly operating system. It demands RAM and it demands a lot of it. Take note, however, that you're wrongly assuming Windows only has 16M free on your 32M machine — typing 'MEM' in a DOS prompt will only show you the memory free that's available to the DOS prompt, which has an upper limit of 16M.

Windows will use typically between (at a rough estimate) 8 and 12 megs depending on your system configuration and settings such as VCCACHE. If you followed the VCCACHE guide from Random Access and set it to a minimum and maximum of 8M, that's fine. A 32M machine can afford an 8M disk cache unless you expect to do some intensive work or play demanding games. If you think you could benefit from more free RAM, set the settings to a minimum and maximum of 4M — this is still an amply sized disk cache ideal for most situations.

Lastly a more efficient method of finding out how much RAM you have free is to use a system utility like Norton's System Information to get a detailed rundown of your system's RAM. Clicking 'Help' then 'About' on most applications will tell you how much RAM you have installed and what percentage of System Resources are free — but this is a very poor guide as this takes into account virtual memory, not just system RAM

Random Access

Welcome to Random Access, a column dedicated to interesting, useful and informative tips about anything and everything to do with your PC. Be it hardware, software, DOS or Windows you'll find tips and tricks listed here every month. If you have some tips of your own you'd like to share with other gamers such as yourself feel free to send your tip into Setup and, if we publish it, we'll be sure to credit and print your name.

BEEP BEEP

Sometimes innocent gamers are confronted by vacant, black, empty screens when they turn their beloved machines on. It's at this stage that gamers often start hyperventilating at the realisation their machine is no longer working and they might have to go without games for hours, days or... dare I say... weeks.

Getting the bugger fixed is of the utmost priority, and knowing what's wrong can speed that up tremendously — you may even be able to fix it yourself.

Bar major screw ups in hardware and software, if your machine fails to turn on AND you hear some beeps issue forth from your PC speaker, be a good game freak and count them. The beeps are your BIOS trying to tell you how severely rooted your machine is, and the listing below will tell you:

BEEPS

- 1 The memory fresh circuitry on the motherboard is faulty
- 2 Parity error — parity is not supported
- 3 Base 64k memory failure
- 4 Timer not functioning
- 5 Processor error — CPU is faulty
- 6 8042/A20 gate failure — Either the keyboard controller is faulty or the BIOS cannot switch to protected mode
- 7 Processor exception interrupt — the CPU generated an exception interrupt
- 8 Video memory failure — No video card is present or its memory is faulty
- 9 ROM checksum error — possibly faulty ROM
- 10 CMOS shutdown error — the shutdown register for CMOS RAM failed
- 11 Cache error — the external cache is faulty

All of these errors occur during POST (Power On Self Test) — the first thing your machine does when you turn it on. They are critical errors and your machine will not boot until they are fixed. Likewise if you don't hear beeps and your machine isn't working it's safe to assume it's not an obvious critical problem associated with your motherboard, CPU, RAM or video card. It's not uncommon for improperly inserted peripherals (RAM, CPU, Video) to cause a POST error, and this is easily rectified by inserting the peripheral correctly.

LOGON BEGONE!

Nothing is more annoying than having to logon to your machine every time you boot up — whether you're on a network or not. Most of the time it doesn't matter what you type anyway, your shares are still active (yes, the wonderful world of Wines secure networking).

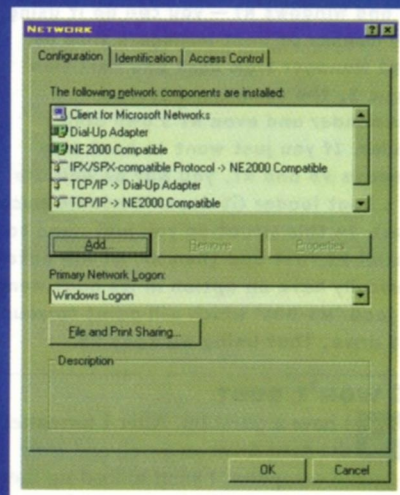
Some third party programs like TweakUI and others offer a neat trick that will log you in for you to save you doing it — but this means that you have to install and run these programs, and the logon screen still flicks up.

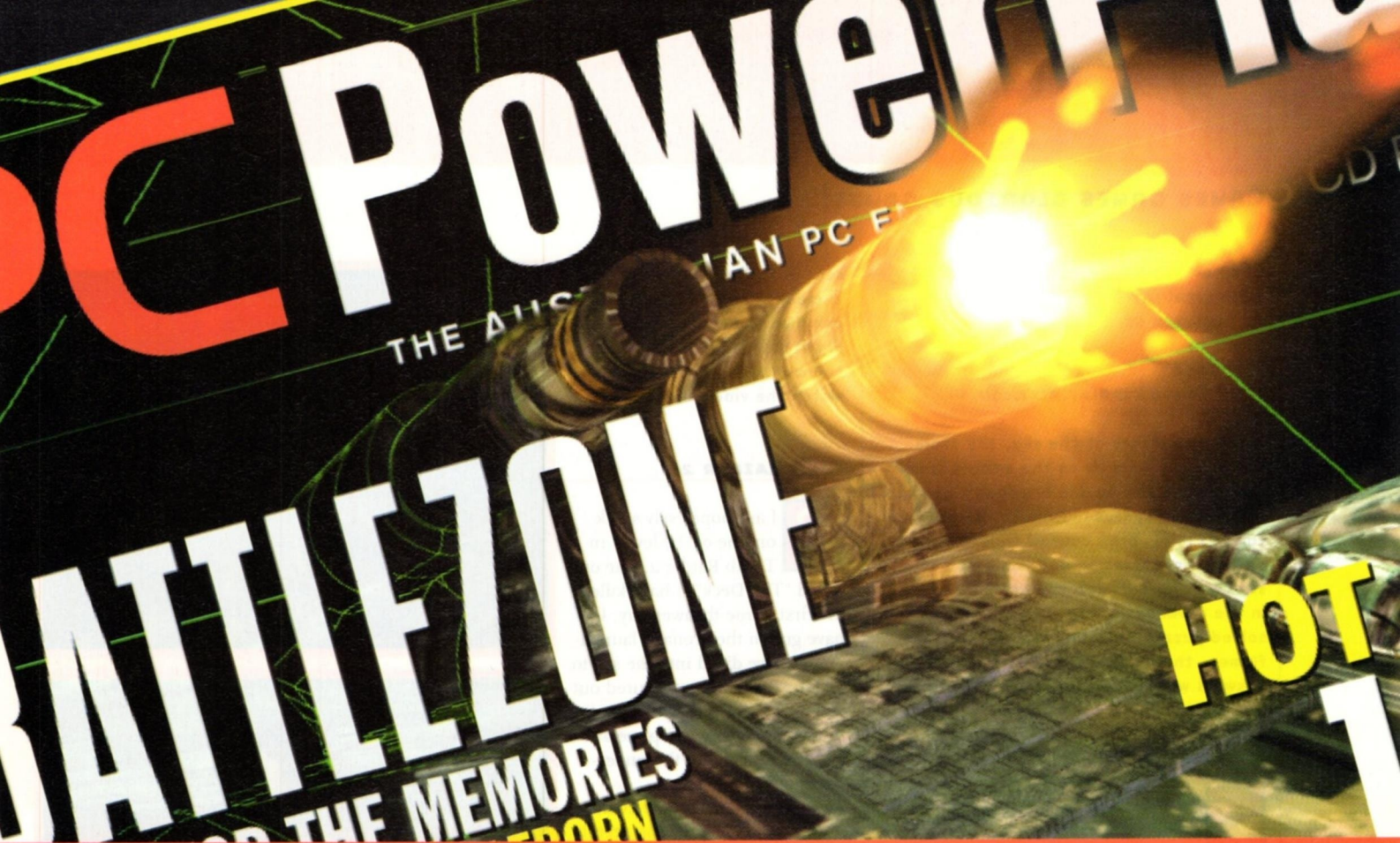
There is a much simpler method to remove the logon screen from your sight forever AND still connect to all your networking resources without being prompted. Just do this:

OPEN UP CONTROL PANEL → NETWORKING and select 'Windows Logon' for the 'Primary Network Logon'.

OPEN UP CONTROL PANEL → PASSWORDS and then blank your password. That is, select to change it and enter nothing for the replacement.

That's it! Reboot and you'll no longer be prompted to logon, but your machine will still be active on the network the same as before. Neat, eh?





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GAMES GAMES GLORIOUS GAMES!

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The Oracle stares at the sky, the stars above shine brightly as the embers from the burning fire beside him shoot into the air. Tiny red sparks illuminate the hard furrows in his brow caused from long periods of concentration and the wisps of smoke rising between the embers are lost in the darkness of the night. As another solved puzzle is ritually placed into the flames, the questions will come and the answers will follow. So sayeth the Oracle.

BROKEN SWORD 2

? Please help me with this problem I have with Broken Sword 2. The problem is that I am in the Condor Trans Global Warehouse and I have just rescued Nico from the secret room. I have picked up the rope from this room to use on the pulley but when it says to put the rope on the statue and then the pulley, George says that it is to short. I have tried everything I know of but I cant do it. Please help

RORY LOVE

***** Broken Sword 2 is a worthy game Rory, and a toughie too. Here's the solution for the entire warehouse scene to get you through. Upon entering the warehouse, walk to the end of the building and climb the ladder and open the first window. Use the hook on the fan. Go back down and knock on the door. Talk to the Mexican man (Pablo) about the label - He'll come out the door. Quickly climb the ladder again and use the barrel on the right, when Pablo stands there use another barrel to knock him into the water. Go in through the door. Examine the drawer in the desk to find a brass key. Go further into the building and talk to the little guy about the key you just found. Use the notice-board on the wall over the desk. Push the button to the elevator and use the nearest crate to block the photocell. Push the switch to the right of the elevator door. Use the scratch marks near on the floor near the wall. Open the door and enter. Take the statue and talk to Nico. Untie her by using the rope she is bound with. Go out and talk to Nico. Use the tape on the photo cell and put the crate in the door back. Use the small crate which is on the top of the other crate. Move the other crate so you can use the pallet carrier to lift the statue. Use the rope on the statue and then use the rope to connect the

statue to the pulley. Lower the pallet carrier again and ask Nico to help you with the big statue. Go out and use the manacles on the cable and watch the video sequence.

TOMB RAIDER 2

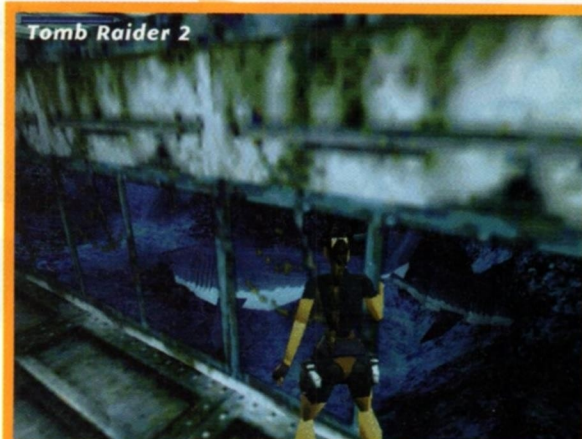
? I am hopelessly stuck on one of the levels in Tomb Raider 2. The one called "The Deck". I have killed the first flame thrower guy, I have gotten the grenade launcher and have dived into the sea to pick up a key. I have figured out where the key is supposed to go, moved the boxes into place and been swimming in the underwater cabin. From there, I pulled the switch, found the corresponding secret passage and drained the water. However, when I return, I enter the only tunnel in the cabin to find a block, which I can only pull. I do so, seeing a brief clip of a propeller with only 2 blades. I go back outside and return to the only propellor I have found. It still has 3 blades on it. I either figured that my game has been glitched or that I havent found the other propellor. Please can you tell me where and how do I solve this problem.

S.B. RULL
HONG KONG

***** To ease your grief Mr Rull, here's the entire solution to "The Deck level" of Tomb Raider 2.

You start this level under immediate attack from a Flamethrower and a workmen to the right. Take care of them quickly then continue around to the right and add the Grenade Launcher to your arsenal. Now head back to where you started and dive in the water. Exit on the left landing to avoid the circling barracuda and kill them then proceed across the ledges to your left to obtain the Stern Key. Jump back in and facing the hull, turn left and head down to the opening in the rocks. Enter then head right and finally left before going up to the hole. Exit the water firing at the approaching workman. The giant propeller is blocking your exit so keep

Tomb Raider 2



going until you find and kill another Flamethrower guy standing by a trapdoor. There is a dead end below so head for the stack of crates. Push the first one then climb on top and push the top box. Drop down and pull the first box then go behind it and push it over to the ledge where the Flamethrower was. Now you can go and move a third box to reveal a door. Use the Stern Key. Enter then swim down and head for the switch on the right wall. Use it to open the dead end from the previous paragraph Return to the trapdoor and flip the switch to drain the room behind the Stern Key door. You will need to kill another boss along the way. Now you can move the box to find the passage leading past the propeller. You should arrive at the raft, so jump in the water and head left and exit quickly to dispatch another workman on shore before dealing with two more frog-

men in the water. Facing the raft, you can jump in and swim down and to the left to find Secret #1; the Stone Dragon hidden in the plants by the rocks. Take the statue then turn around and head left around the rocks to the tunnel. Watch out for the approaching Barracuda and kill him from the safety of dry land. Continue down the tunnel, ignoring the left fork, and get the medkit by the hole in the floor and use it to totally heal yourself. Hang from the lowest end of the ledge to reduce your damage before dropping into the hole and land on the box. Take the Cabin Key and go on a shark hunt.

Kill the first two sharks then kill a third shark who is lurking over by where you got the dragon statue. Now return to the tunnel and this time take the left fork.

Continue up the winding passage until you reach the upper deck. Explore the area a bit before dropping down to the deck by the pool and kill the flamethrower and a few friends before approaching the strange looking panel on the wall of the pool. A frogman swims out as you approach so kill him then take Secret #2; the Gold Dragon that he was guarding.

Some Uzi and M-16 ammo is partially hidden by those boxes near the pool. Scarf it all up then head over to where you can see the area where you found the Grenade Launcher earlier. Do a running jump to the flat ledge then do another running jump to grab and pull up to the walkway. Continue forward and do another running jump to the orange sloped surface. Head right until you can see the stacked boxes below you. Hang here and drop then grab immediately so you can shimmy left and pull up. Now do a running jump in the crack in the wall. Continue down the tunnel jumping across the platforms. Take care of the workmen who would try and stop you. Exit the cave and do a running jump to grab and pull up to the roof. Head across the roof and to the left and jump over the alley to find and enter the trapdoor. Kill the workman and load up on ammo. Head for the door which will open automatically and pull the box to reveal a switch. Flip it to open a door on the upper deck. Go out and up and to the right to the door you just opened to find M-16 ammo and the lock which happens to match your Cabin Key.

Fall through the collapsing floor and press the button you find there to open the final door on the upper deck. Follow the cave to the hole in the floor and retrieve the Storage Shed Key. Now you can go to the Storage Shed which is by the propeller. As you head back along the walkway by the orange sloped surface Secret #3; the Jade Dragon waits for you in a small cave. Jump to the left of the cave entrance then shimmy right until you can pull up and take your prize. Watch for the glass when you

leave. Jump over the glass and get ready for a big fight when you land.

Two Flamethrower guys are guarding the Storage Shed. Take care of these deadly enemies quickly (I recommend the M-16) then open the shed with your key to claim the first Artifact of the game - the Seraph.

RIVEN



Please Help!!! In Riven I can't open the safe thingy at the start so I can look through the hatch. I also need help with all the bits at the start. (I hope Riven doesn't get any harder, or I am in big trouble.

REECE JONES

MOSS VALE, NSW



Well Reece, the good news is that I can help you with Riven, the bad news is that it most definitely gets harder! Keep reading the Oracle though for more clues. Here's the solution for the first Island (Super Dome).

Immediately, you will find yourself transported into a tiny prison cell. There is no apparent way out. A native eventually appears. He wrests the Prison Book, the

around, go back past the prison cell, and up the steps next to the cliff. When you reach the top of the steps (where a narrow bridge spans the sea ahead of you) turn left twice. Go through the doorway into the pentagonal room, and have a look through the portcullis that blocks the other doorway. There's a walkway there that spans the chasm next to the cone-shaped device. The object of your first puzzle is to open that portcullis so you can cross the walkway.

Exit the room and turn around. Press the button located on the wall to the right 4 times. The room rotates one position clockwise each time. It's pentagonal in shape, so it will rotate to 5 possible positions, aligning the 2 doors to different positions each time. Now you have to find another way in! Turn around, and go left down the other side of the cliff steps.

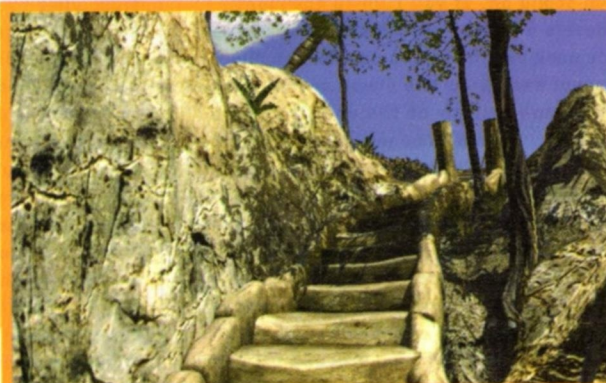
When you arrive at the bottom, turn to the left twice and you will encounter a locked gate. At first, it appears that you require a key, but you can crawl under the gate by clicking when the hand cursor is toward the bottom of the screen.

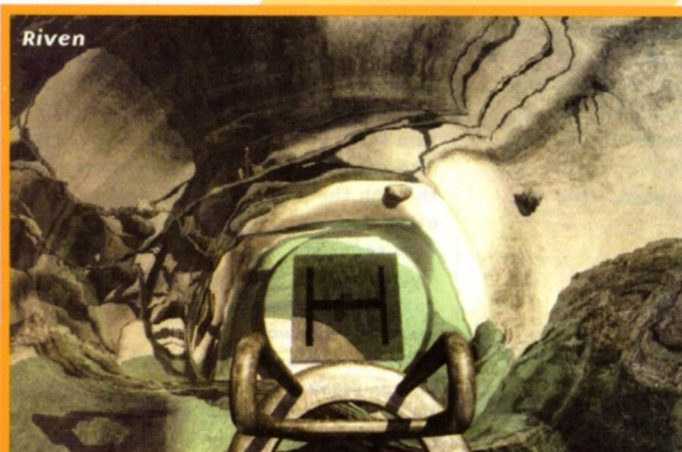
Enter the pentagonal room and head through the opposite doorway. Go to the pipes and look up to see the steam escaping from the top of the vertical pipe. Throw



Riven

one you're supposed to use to trap 'Gehn' with, away from you through the bars of the cell. He is then struck down (by a dart?) and dragged away. His assailant sets you free. Directly in front of you is a strange cone-shaped device. Walk forward and have a look. Note the pipe going into the rockface. It powers the device. Turn





the switch, and the steam is now diverted to the cone-shaped device (note the symbol for it on the plate above the switch). Turn around and head back for the doorway. Push the button on the right hand wall twice, then flip the switch on the left hand side of the doorway to the up position. You'll see the portcullis in the opposite doorway rise. Head through the newly opened portcullis (a bronze door set into the cave wall still blocks your path) and turn to the left. Press the button on the wall twice, then turn to the left and flip the switch on the left-hand side of the doorway to the up position. This action causes the portcullis which blocks the door to the chasm walkway (which you can't see at the moment) to open. Now we just have to get back there! Head through the opposite doorway, to wind up where you began this exercise. Then turn around, press the button on the wall twice, and head through the now open portcullis to find yourself on the walkway across the chasm. Whew! Cross the walkway and enter the golden dome. Continue following the walkway through the dome until you emerge outside again. As you continue along the path, on your left you see a steam switch at the end of a small promontory. Throw this switch. It powers a section of bridge you will need to lower in order to get back to the dome later on! Turn around and continue along the pathway in the direction you were originally headed. Just before you enter a tunnel, there is a sort of lift you can stand on. If you turn to the right, there's a button on the wall, but it doesn't work yet. Continue on through the tunnel and throw the steam switch located on a small balcony at the end. Then turn around and go all the way back through the dome. Just before you exit the dome, you can try throwing the switch on the wall next to the entrance. It raises and lowers the chasm walkway. The steam switch on the small balcony powers it. Go back through the pentagonal room and cross the walkway over the sea that is directly in front of you. Proceed into the

tunnel. Halfway through the tunnel is a door set into the wall to the left. Enter, and look through the port-hole to the right. Throw the switch on the wall, and you see a door opening somewhere. Exit this room, and continue on down the tunnel. Open the door at the end of the tunnel and proceed into the temple.

Exit via the door to the right (which you saw being opened while looking through the porthole). Push the button on the gizmo to the right of the metal steps. A rail car pulls up as a result. Get into the car, sit in the driver's seat, and hit the rotary switch to turn the car around. Then throw the knife switch to move the car forward. Enjoy the roller coaster style journey to the next island.

LIGHTHOUSE



I'm stuck on the very start of Lighthouse. I get up to the house with the baby, open the door, go to the hallway, then can't get any further. Please Help.

**EDWIN GROVES,
NEW ZEALAND**



Ok Edwin, I'll get you started, but after this, you're on your own again.

Once at the lighthouse, take the letter from inside the mailbox and walk two screens towards the front door. Click on the black lantern and take the small key from inside.

Walk closer to the front door and then position your cursor so that it is pointing down. Move the four items around by clicking on them and holding while you move the mouse. You will find the front door key under one of the objects (this changes from game to game).

Backup and go around to the right side of the house. Click on the storage shed and unlock the lock with the small key from the lantern. Take the crow bar and then click on the breaker box. Reset all three breakers. You will notice that the third one will not reset yet. The lights will come back on inside.

Unlock the front door with the key and go inside then go through the door on your left to the kitchen / living room. Read the papers on the counter then click on the refrigerator and take the bottle of milk.

Click the bookshelf behind you and take the compass from the second shelf. Go across the hall into the baby's bedroom and pick up the toy soldier on the floor. Click on Amanda then give her the bottle when she starts to cry. Turn to your right and click on the papers which are on the night stand table. Read them then turn around and take the alarm clock from the small table. Leave the bedroom

At any point in time from here, you may hear Amanda start to cry. As soon as you hear her crying, drop whatever you are doing and go into her room. You will see the Dark Man kidnapping her. From here you have the choice to follow him into the porthole, if you do you're on your own. Here's a little more in case you don't.

Go into the study/den. Click on the several books which are on the second shelf of the bookcase to reveal a hidden, wall safe. Turn to your left and take the following items from the small, shelving unit :

1. Small mechanical bird
2. Shell collection
3. Two, tear shaped, red objects

Turn around and click on the top drawer of the desk. Take the letter opener. Click on the letter in your inventory (it will be displayed in a window). Now click on the letter opener and use it to...that's right...open the letter. Read the letter and notice the numbers at the bottom. This is the combination to the wall safe (5-18-28). Click on the wall safe and enter the combination. 5 right, 18 left (past zero), 28 right.

Once opened, click on the handle and take the documents from inside (read them). Notice the date which is written on page 59 (8-24-96). It is the combination to the locked door in the hallway (Dr. Krick's laboratory). Open the desk and click on the papers. Read the papers and take notice of the picture on page 118 of the bird in a circle. Click on the cube inside the desk. Turn the cube around and click on the spinner on one of the sides. It will open to display a series of wooden blocks. Click on the light colored blocks starting from the top. Work your way down and from left to right. Once these are set, you can slide some of the lower blocks around until you reveal a small, red button. Press this button. Another part of the box will open to display a large, red button. Click it.

Now click on the small, gray button on the adjacent side of the cube and then again on the large, red button. A small drawer will open. Take the key from inside the drawer. Click the red button again and another panel will open only slightly. Turn the cube so that the partial opening is facing you. Now click on the light, brown square in the lower, right corner of the opening. A picture puzzle is revealed.

FINISH GAMES IN LESS THAN 5 MINUTES!

QUAKE 2 SECRETS/EASTER EGG

At the Final Showdown after the final monster is killed try going under into the recovery corridor again. Face the dead-end corridor and shoot on the crack that wasn't there before. Go in and look at all the pictures. Then press the buttons they have. Wait for the ladder downstairs to reveal itself. Go down!

CROC

Enter these codes during game play or on the island select screen.

argolife = Unlimited lives

argoskip = Level select

To unlock ALL the secrets and place you at the last Level of the Secret 5th Island type this password exactly as shown.

-[LLLDRRLDRDLUR]-

STREETFIGHTER ZERO EXTRA HIDDEN FIGHTERS

Place the cursor in the RANDOM selector within the fighter select menu. Press and hold the designed key to select your fighter:

AKUMA (GOUKI) = 3X KICK + Punch or Kick button

M. BISON (VEGA) = 3X PUNCH + Punch or Kick button

DAN HIBIKI = SELECT + Punch or Kick button

HELLFIRE (THE DIABLO ADDON)

To select a secret character in Hellfire, create a file named command.txt in the installed directory. Then add this to the file:

multitest cowquest theoquest bardtest

You can get a new character, The Bard.

To access the barbarian, change **bardtest** in the command.txt file to **barbariantest**

This will also allow multiplayer facilities.

DARK EARTH

Press P to pause the game, then type the code (which is case-sensitive) and press Enter.

fortytwo = Easy Mode (enables other codes and cheat keys)

dwarf = Small character

baffe = Big hands

bigfoot = Big feet

bighead = Big head

normal = Normal character

muchbetter = Arkhan relieves himself
Cheat keys:

Ctrl-D = Refill Arkhan's life gauge

D = Decrease opponent's life to 1

How to Beat "Yong" in 12 moves:

(6, 6) (3, 3) (3, 5) (6, 7) (6, 4) (6, 2) (8, 4) (5, 8) (1, 5) (1, 7) (8, 3) (3, 7)

The first number in each bracketed series is the horizontal line and the second number is the position to place you piece on the vertical.

WING COMMANDER PROPHECY EASTER EGGS

Note: During gameplay you can hold down 'Shift' will you type in the codes to stop from activating any ship functions, and it will still work fine.

goodtarget = during spaceflight to change the targetting mode in the cockpit to one similar to that used on the turrets.

Dynomite = the standard debug mode/cheat code. Type during spaceflight.

CTRL I = switches to Invulnerable

CTRL K = Kill makes your ship self-destruct (May Not Work)

CTRL C = Makes you Un-Collidable (You can pass through anything; No missile, laser or ship can hit you. Another form of invulnerability, without the cheats used showing up on the Stats screens.

CTRL F12 = Targeted Friendlies forward shields disappear, Targeted Enemies forward shields disappears or Targeted Friend or Enemy Capital ship sub-target will be destroyed, and the whole ship will blow-up when the bridge and engines are targeted and destroyed.

Moretunes = enable the 'radio', which allows you to select individual Cobalt 60 *or* Orchestral tracks during spaceflight. Type this cheat during spaceflight.

'alswantsmoreships' = type at the simulator mission selection screen, and then follow the on screen commands to allow yourself to fly enemy ships in the simulated missions! Includes the Dralthi, Vaktoth, Devil Ray and both types of Mantas and Morays. Type 'Z' to activate enemy ship selection.

I-WAR

In the player history screen type **"darkgoat"** Which will enable the following cheat keys:

In the player history screen:

Left-Shift Backspace = Add selected mission to history

Left-Shift = = Toggle outcome of selected mission

Left-Shift 0 = Add all missions. (Make all missions accessible)

In the game:

Left-Shift P = dump a PCX image file to PSG\RESOURCE\ART\SCREENS

Left-Shift M = dump a continuous stream of PCXs (fill up your hard disk quick)

Left-Shift 8 = jump to vicinity of target

Left-Shift 9 = match velocity with target

Left-Shift 0 = explode targeted ship

Left-Shift i = make player invulnerable.

Left-Shift w = force mission win

**JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER**

To fly all the planes and helicopters in JSF, while in the Pilot/Plane select screen do this: Hold down both control keys and hit the enter key to cycle through every aircraft there is in the game which you can now fly! While in game play press ctrl+g+u for homing bullets.

OVERBOARD!

Level codes

1-2 = Ship, Skull, Fish, Anchor, Ship, Anchor

1-3 = Ship, Anchor, Skull, Ship, Anchor, Fish

1-4 = Skull, Ship, Fish, Anchor, Anchor, Ship

2-1 = Fish, Fish, Anchor, Ship, Skull, Anchor

2-2 = Skull, Anchor, Anchor, Fish, Anchor, Ship

2-3 = Fish, Anchor, Ship, Ship, Ship, Skull

2-4 = Anchor, Fish, Ship, Skull, Skull, Fish

3-1 = Ship, Skull, Skull, Fish, Anchor, Skull

3-2 = Fish, Skull, Anchor, Fish, Skull, Fish

3-3 = Fish, Fish, Ship, Skull, Fish, Ship

3-4 = Ship, Anchor, Ship, Fish, Anchor, Fish

4-1 = Skull, Skull, Anchor, Ship, Fish, Fish

4-2 = Ship, Anchor, Skull, Fish, Fish, Anchor

4-3 = Skull, Ship, Skull, Skull, Fish, Ship

4-4 = Ship, Fish, Ship, Fish, Ship, Anchor

5-1 = Anchor, Ship, Fish, Skull, Fish, Ship

5-2 = Fish, Ship, Anchor, Skull, Ship, Fish

5-3 = Ship, Fish, Skull, Anchor, Anchor, Skull

5-4 = Skull, Ship, Anchor, Fish, Ship, Skull

TRIPLE PLAY 98

Type these codes at the Stadium or Team select screens:

1 2 1 2 Ctrl = EA Dream Team.

1 2 1 2 Ctrl 2 1 3 = new stadiums.

1 2 1 2 Shift Ctrl = EA Dream Team in their underwear.

To hit a monster home run, hold down 1, 2, 3 and 4 and hit up, Space, left, right, Shift, Alt, and Ctrl. When you swing, use Shift and up.

Write to PC PowerPlay
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REDFERN, NSW 2016
letters@pcpowerplay.next.com.au

Letter of the month! Win a subscription!

Each month we'll choose a letter that we think is THE BEST that month. Not the funniest (although we reserve the right to hand out a freebie if a letter makes us laugh HARD), but the most intelligent, the most incisive, the most informed.

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A Difference of Opinion

Too often I see in your letters section "You guys gave this game a score of 90% so I bought it straight away and it sucked!!!" Why can't these people see these reviews for what they are... reviews. And they are reviewed by people with varying tastes in games, of various ages, with various lifestyles, of various sexes (I am sure there is more than two) and various gaming ability. A reviewer may love an RTS game for its strategy component, resource management and graphics and give such a game a high score because they found it easy to get into and very playable. But a player who may also like RTS games might NOT like resource management or strategy and just wants to cream things. So the player doesn't agree with the reviewer on the same game because they kept on getting creamed and really can't make it anywhere in a game.

The player doesn't agree with the reviewer, SO WHAT? With everything available to the consumer these days to check out games, should they base their decisions on one single review? There's game magazines galore, demos everywhere, the game companies web site, the guy at the local games store. Why then do people come back and slam reviewers and say they are in game company pockets etc? If they were on the payroll then why don't we see blazing reviews for games like Streets of SimCity (30% in issue 21) I am sure Maxis would have a rather large wad to throw around for a "good score". And just because a game

gets a high mark doesn't mean it's worth buying for YOU. If the review is on a driving sim and you don't like driving sims in general, it doesn't matter how good the game is, you probably won't get much value out of it. Read the review closely, does the reviewer mention complex controls, a steep learning curve, a manual you could hold a barn door open with in a gale? The reviewer might love these things, but maybe you don't. You might love the initial quick rushes that are possible with Dark Reign but hate the slowness in the beginning or Total Annihilation or vice versa...

They are both the same genre, they just have different attributes. If you really want to slam someone for a game you truly think was not worth it's 30x40cm place on a game shops shelf, then slam the game company that made it, write to them and tell them it's no good and why it is no good, if enough people do then maybe they will stop making bad games...

Glenn Martin

Couldn't have said it better ourselves!

486 Blues

IT'S ALL OVER FOR US PEOPLE... us 486 owners, in fact it was "All Over for Us" the second Intel invented the Pentium processor. I own a 486 SX with 8MB of RAM (I think even I could run faster than my computer). With the Pentium II 300 and these super 3D accelerators just around the corner, our good and old 486 are being outdated at a stupendous rate. At school we have Pentium 166's and it's just painful to come home to a piece of ancient junk in my house everyday, fellow 486 owners will know what I mean when I say I get sick of seeing all these games in gaming mags with beautiful graphics and then being teased of how good these games run with 3D accelerators, and knowing for sure that it would take a miracle for these games to run on our old computers. Also, nearly all the games that come out now are Windows 95. Although I have Windows 95 on my computer (don't ask me why) the games are still impossible to run. I think the game companies are working

LETTER OF THE MONTH

PC PowerPhallus

May I bring to your attention the true and correct meaning of something that you have written and published in your "Hot Hardware Guide". On page 98 (titled 'Fast and Hard'???) in the case section it reads 'Also doubles as a large phallic symbol'. This, however, is somewhat misleading. Allow me to explain. According to the Pocket Oxford Dictionary, the word phallic is the adjective form of the word "phallus". But it is the meaning of this word that I am drawing to your attention. "Image of the penis used in religious rites as symbol of generation". After both reading this and your article I can't help but to wonder if you are suggesting that all of your readers go and purchase a large penis shaped case, or if the writer is a member of a strange cult who worship large, hard penis shaped objects. This does, however, explain to me the true meaning of your title... Fast and Hard. I personally found the concept of a penis shaped case quite offensive as a healthy, heterosexual male and it makes me wonder if gaming is the real primary purpose of the writer's PC. I have also realised why I cannot find a name on this page anywhere to show who this sick individual is, but it is my suggestion that they be next month's "Freak Of The Month". I believe that young children who read this magazine because Santa bought a PC for Christmas do not deserve to have these ideas planted into their heads, but rather told about the good games to hassle their parents about buying. I thank you for accepting this criticism in good taste and hope to see a response or correction in your magazine soon.

Yours in Quaking

Paul Stewart

Unanderra

NSW

Thanks for setting us right on that one Paul! Being computer gamers, we're not overly familiar with the appropriate usage of the whole phallus/phallus/phalli thing, you see. It's just that we're going through this phase in our lives where we find that sort of thing really funny. We're sure it'll pass in time...

with the makers of the 3D accelerators and Intel to force us gamers into buying better processors and 3D cards.

I still have a fair few games though, (Command and Conquer, X-Wing CD, The LucasArts Archives VOL 2) and I've always been able to finish the games I have fairly quickly. For example, C&C took me only 2 1/2 weeks (I do not have a modem). Then again some of the games like Rebel Assault 1 and 2 were pretty lame anyway. Maybe it's because I spend a lot of time playing games, and I do mean a lot, not like 3 or 4 hours a day at a new game. Try waking up at 8am and playing a game like Tie fighter or C&C until 10pm, that about 14 hours minus 1 hour allowing for food intake and human communication. I'm 16 years old and I've

been glued to computers since I was 4, during that time I've had a C64 and I've still got my Amiga 500.

On a final note, I was looking through issue 20 just before, and what did I see. On page 4 (I think, it didn't have a number) I was looking at what you were playing, as I was looking up the page. Under contributors, the word "Spoonman" caught my eye. I thought to my self, "hang on, wasn't he a Freak Of The Month" I went straight to issue 18 and there it was, Rod "Spoonman" Campbell, F.O.T.M. Maybe, just maybe, you're all would-be freaks :)

Dean Messenger
Bannockburn, QLD

You're a normal, healthy gamer Dean. 14 hours of gaming a day on a 486 shows that you're made of the right stuff. Keep the faith broth-

er! And upgrade...

Yes indeed, the Webstalk Spoonman and FOTM are one and the same. Spoony's a talented (we hope...), aspiring journalist, he used the FOTM to get our attention first, then via 50 emails a day for 2 months convinced us that he has what it takes. And he does. His knowledge of all things internet and gaming make a great contribution to PCPP. He's our very own pet freak now.

Lara and Console Death

I have read your magazine for 8 months now and cannot understand where some of your readers get off complaining about such feeble things such as pricing and, d'oh, the stairs on Quake have a glitch etc.

I would be happy to get a glitch on Quake, as a matter of fact I would be happy to get quake on my system (486 Dx33 ex networking, 40MHz, 8bit, 13omeg, no sound card piece of history) which may I add still runs Win 3.11. If you can't guess I mainly play my games on friends and rellies computers or on a console such as N64 or PSX.

I heard KOOPA say that Tomb Raider 2 was crap, well I have to agree. All I heard from reviews was to expect new and exciting levels and speaking as someone who completed the game fully (yes I found all the secrets) in just over a week and other than the James Bond type exit in Venice found it to be just Tomb Raider 1 with a bit more silicon added.

The other thing that gets a mention is Pete's review of Quake 2, a damn fine review but I feel that you could have added another percent or two (after all Win 95 was buggier than a cockroach farm, but is still classified as the best OS on the market). It is a very funky game and although it is not an original idea was reconstructed in such a way that now it has made other developers stand up and take their heads out of each others laps and create the next "Quake Killer".

On a lighter note, is it just me or are the consoles just fading away? I mean that prices for a decent (P166MMX, 16bit, 1.4gb, video accelerated and internet ready) are dropping faster than an Asian stock exchange. I personally am building my own sys-

Yummy! Ion Storm's Daikatana is looking very tasty. We want it NOW!



tem (PII300, 64 SDRAM, 6.4 ultra, viper 330 app, AWE64 etc..) for reasons of my own cost being one. Now back to the point people rave about N64 but it is in a way just a graphics card on steroids with pretty looking bulky controllers. The same can be said about the PSX but with fewer steroids and a CD-ROM whacked on top. The point being, to play all your games you are expected to buy controllers, memory cards, DD drives, expansion kits when will it all end? By the time you finish forking out all the money for all the extras you could have bought a decent budget system and played better quality games than the consoles could ever try to reproduce (yes TR2 was as buggy as hell on the PSX as well!).

I'm going to take a cold shower now after that outburst.

HAIL TO THE KING BABY!!

Steve Dye

Total Abomination?

98% for Total Annihilation! Ashton Mills has earned my undying contempt for this outrageous score for what is really a rather woeful game. I've played all the major real-time strategy/tactical games since Dune 2 and most of the minor titles, and of all of them, the only game I enjoyed less was the laughable Z. Sure, TA has some (well, one) good points, namely

scavenging wrecks for resources, but with infinite resources and these resources coming in at such a high speed, as well as no cap on unit numbers and no expenditure on maintenance, the entire game simply boils down to building a number of production facilities, building 50-100 units, sending them off, watching them destroyed and then start building another group. There is not even any real resource management beyond building the initial base.

Even though Red Alert had little replay value, (every time you play a mission it is identical to the last time) I still had fun playing it the first time, and I'm still playing Age of Empires daily, months after buying it, but I had to force myself to keep playing TA beyond the first half-dozen missions of the first campaign simply because I wanted to see an ending.

Playing this game does not involve any strategy, since there is nothing to research, or develop, or to alter in any way at all, and there are no tactics involved because a group of 100 units will simply spread out over half the map and is thus incapable of any sort of any sort of manoeuvre whatsoever, so TA must be put in the same real-time arcade (read as real-time crap) category as Z and should be publicly vilified as such.

Vaughan Wilson

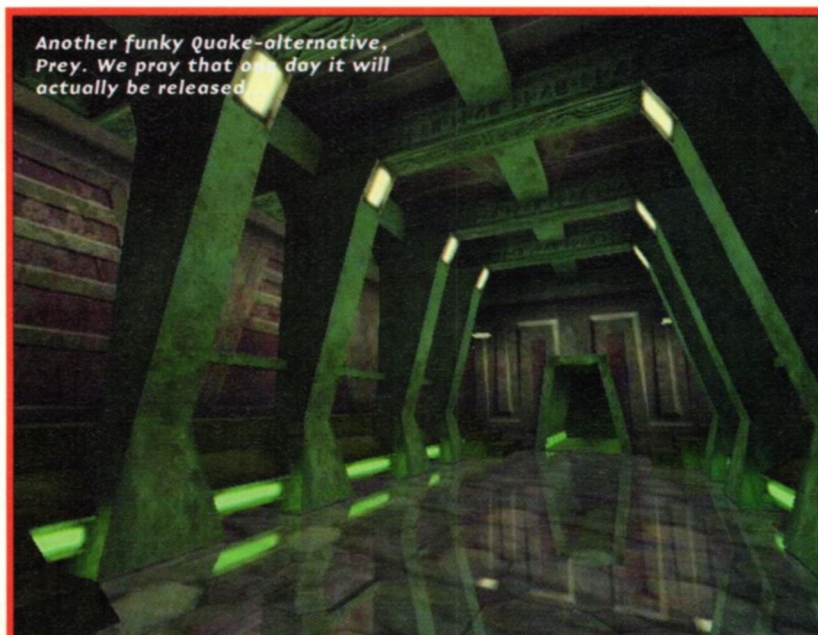
Ashton Mills replies:

I'm sorry you don't like TA Vaughan, but perhaps you should give it more time? I don't think you've played the game much because your points are incorrect. There is a unit limit — 200 — and it's flexible. You can even remove individual units from a game or set a unit limit on a per unit basis. There is in-depth resource management involved and if you'd tried building a Bertha you would have found that out real quick. As for the comment of 'no strategy'... I don't know whether to laugh at you or cry for you.

I too have played every RTS style game since Dune 2 and, funnily enough, agree with you that Z was one game that should have stayed a concept. But you are most certainly in the minority with your opinion of TA.

So far the game has scored 90+ in every major gaming mag in the world. In fact, many online gaming mags have recently closed the voting on the reader choice awards for 1997 Strategy Game Of The Year — and TA has won in almost all of them.

Lastly, I'll be the first to admit that I didn't find the single player missions particularly appealing, but TA isn't about droll campaign maps — TA is about brilliant multiplayer RTS gaming. Much like Doom was more popular for deathmatch than the adventure, so too TA sits high as king of multiplayer RTS. You only have to play it to see.



Another funky Quake-alternative, Prey. We pray that one day it will actually be released.



More beautiful 3D corridors to ram-page through. Riot is coming to save us all

CD or not CD?

Having been a purchaser of PowerPlay since #1, not missing one issue, I've seen the mag evolve, grow, and generally, crap on every other magazine out. However, now that PC PowerPlay is approaching its 2nd Birthday, I feel some niggles must become known. They are all, to do with PowerPlay's CD-ROM. The first, and most annoyingly regular feature, is the mention in the mag of several patches, demos, or otherwise, that are "on this month's CD" Quite regularly, they ain't. The Quake patches for example waited 2-3 months, and I found no Grand Theft Auto or Test Drive 4 3Dfx demo's this month(#21).

Next is the menu. Is it a draw out of the hat for the option to put an option under the app/game? Play off CD, install, or run setup never appear together, so if you want to place the game on the HDD to run faster, there is rarely an option.

Why can't you give the option to "Play off CD" OR "Install"? Us with the 8x and below CDROMs do suffer!

Also, it appears to me as if the CD is compiled by installing the games to E: drive. Why? Aren't games usually in some form of archive when they

get to you, or are all demos astonishingly just setup on the manufacturers E: Drive?

OK, Enough of the abuse, Now some praise. First of all, The 3D support panel is simply the easiest way to tell if my 3Dfx will love or hate a game. Also the +Plus panel is also a top Idea. Tech.Txt is an excellent column, discussing current issues, without treating you like an information infant.

Josh Bynon

Jere Lawrence, CD Editor responds:

The issue of patches and the promise of included games is one that I'm glad has been brought up. In regard to the promise of a 3Dfx version of a certain game for the next issue, one of 2 things happens:

Firstly, it can be a whole re-release of the game taking up many megabytes of space. The second is a patch for the original to add 3D support. The 2nd option is one that causes quite a dilemma, for to assume that everyone bought the previous issue of PowerPlay is a wrong one. It therefore requires

the whole title to be put on the cover CD again. With every month bringing in more and more games competing for space on the CD, it is unfortunately these potentially repeated titles that get "left on the CD cutting room floor," so to speak.

The solution, of course, is for me to shut my big mouth from now on. Only one release of the game will be made per CD, with the exception only to be extremely popular titles.

As for the menu, the way it is made is that

if a title can run off the CD, only a run option is included on the menu. In the introduction to the CD liftout guide you will see instructions on how to copy these games to your own PC. Included in the format of the liftout guide is the actual path to the game, so you know exactly where to copy it from. I suggest you take a look, this format has been in place for over 6 months.

Overall, the Cover CD is something we work very hard on here, and despite the problems, we are still very proud. When placed in comparison with other mags' cover CD's, rarely to they have the number of demos that ours do. Even more rarely to they put the effort in to allow you to run the applications off the CD, saving you valuable disk space. Combine that with the fact that some cover CDs have a menu system even more primitive than our own - it's really not that bad. Yes, some games slipped through and didn't work, the alternative to prevent this is to force installation of every application onto your machine, filling your Start menu, adding endless amounts of info to your registry and cluttering up your system. Your call.

Totally Retro

Fair enough - these total Quake conversions are not too bad at all and they provide a cheap extension to a good game. However, apart from one or two original ideas, they are all just more of the same Quake clones we get at

full price.

I admit that I have no idea how Quake C works, but some of the results are brilliant, such as Rally and Painkeep et al. It shows how versatile the engine is. Ideas seem to be the stumbling block.

My no.1 idea would be a 3D conversion for the C64 classic Spy Vs Spy (1, 2 & 3 combined). One player would be fun, but two player would be awesome — setting up carefully constructed booby traps by out-smarting your opposition player into thinking he can pick up a piece of the puzzle, while you hide in a shadow watching him get blown up - now that is satisfying. Instead of Rambo style gameplay a bit of fun/simple strategy, and some action.

Others - Paradroid, Castles Of Dr Creep, Ballblazer, Strangeloop, Gates of Dawn, Hover Bovver (only kidding) I know the financial rewards are not great, but the kudos and attention that a good conversion would bring the author may lead to higher programming honours.

S Yedob

The retro rush has already started. Battlezone is reviewed this issue and Sentinel Returns is previewed. We're sure this current trend has nothing to do with developers running out of ideas, and we look forward to the remakes you mention - just as much as we hope there'll be lots of great original games this year too...

A Letter

I have an event to relate to you, an event which will changed my life, and those around me.

Even now, hours after this moment of pure ecstasy I enjoyed, I find myself awe-struck and awake at 1 in the morning, writing my praise to what I now refer to as... My Saviour.

There I was, walking down a lane at my local shopping centre, the amazing Tugerranong Hyperdome, with a good friend, when a I caught a glint in the corner of my eye. Discounting this as someone passing by with light reflecting off their watch, I continued walking. Passing my newsagent, I saw the glimmer again, and this time it was accompanied by a strange unnerving whispering... Sam.....Sam.....the voice seemed

to be calling me, and although one would expect me to be distressed or frightened by such a voice, a felt a calming sensation, and a tingle down my spine. I followed the angelic voice into my newsagent...

Sam....Sam....when I abruptly appeared in one of the aisles supporting dozens of gaming magazines. The voice seemed to be gaining strength when suddenly, a bright light shone before my eyes, temporarily blinding me. Gazing into this strange godly light, I saw a rectangular outline...silhouetted against the blazing light.

And peering closer, I saw this light to be...PC PowerPlay, standing in all its' mighty glory!

There I was, an untouched gamer, filled with hopes and aspirations of finding the perfect gaming mag, when your magazine stepped into my life.

Gazing at your magazine, I was struck dumb by its sheer presence, forcing my knees to buckle and my head to go into a dizzy spin of confusion. As I regained my senses, I reached forward, my arms tingling and my face now sweating. Perspiration dripped from my chin and onto the some of the lesser gaming mags. I reached forward a little farther, incapable of quite reaching it, and then, as if moved by some cosmic force, the magazine slid towards me on a bed of air. I touched it - my very first touch - and like a jolt of electricity the knowledge of a thousand games flowed into my veins, the arcane secrets touching my very soul, my very being.

My heart pounding, and my blood pumping, I tried to walk towards the counter only to find my legs had turned to a liquid state and I was unable to move. Seeing an elderly lady nearby, I lurched for her and forced myself up and leaned on her decrepit shoulder. I pulled myself and gathering all my strength I pushed forward from the withering old crone and made my way towards the counter.

I pulled out my wallet with trembling hands, and reached for a \$20. The man at the counter said, "No mate, it's \$8.95".

My mouth dropped as if an invisible weight was tied to my tooth. How could an item of

such magnificence, such beauty, such power, be worth a such an infinitesimal sum?!

Here I was, willing to pay a sum of \$20 or more, you can conceive the stupefaction, the shock, no...words cannot describe what I felt at such a minute price.

Handing over the amount, I stood caressing my newly found bundle of joy, 130 page of glorious writing. I was spoken to by other customers to move on, but I stood in absolute exultation, complete rapture. A truly momentous occasion had just occurred, one which I shall never forget for as long as I live. Love, is nothing compared to what I feel towards my newly acquired PC PowerPlay, love is completely and utterly eclipsed by this overwhelming sense of joy I now feel. Of all my many years of life, I wouldn't have traded that moment for all of it put together.

Thankyou PC PowerPlay, for making my life, and indeed the whole world, a better place for us gamers.

Samuel Pearson
Wow. Thanks!

Any Which Way You Can

I feel compelled to comment on an article in your February issue: 'The Future of Gaming'. Both sides of the argument were put forth very well and well supported. I do not agree with the idea that the only good single-player games are of the RPG and adventure genres. Sure, adventure games are not very well adapted to the multiplayer market, but that doesn't mean that there will not be a good multiplayer adv. game sometime in the near future.

I play both single-player and multiplayer games and I like them both. I do not pass judgement over one or the other saying that multiplayer is better etc. I believe that the two types of games should be approached with different states of mind. e.g. I don't expect the AI in a single player game to have the same number of faculties that a human has but on the other hand, total immersion into a single player game is easier than in a multiplayer game.

Dominic Joseph Lesko

FREAK of the month

Freak File: Mage

PCPP's new goal is to shatter the lives of cute young woman buy slavin off at them!



To PC PowerPlay, It must be really fun to write your magazine with all your jokes about the articles in question, I really think some of it is extremely funny, except on one occasion. I scanned through the Heavy Gear review, I than saw a side article featuring a picture of Scary Spice. Being a Spice Girl fan I read it. What I read was not quite as funny as expected, actually it pissed me off (though that's easy when it comes to my religions clashing head-to-head). I only found one friend who found that funny, but than he finds it funny when you point your finger at him.

See, I'm a heterosexual with a male hormone that lets me feel attracted to members of the opposite sex that look good! Apparently you are A) Gay, B) Lacking this hormone, C) Impotent or D) The last woman you were attracted to was nicknamed Chubby and was 18'7" tall when she was laying down, and when she died of heart failure your sex life died with her! And before you think that I'm only interested in their looks, think again! Their music is extremely good! Actually they're one of my favourite groups, along with Live, Foo Fighters, Smash Mouth, Metallica, Jewel and many others! Just three questions!

1. Who is your favourite Pin-Up?, Let me guess I-Suc, Zap and Taylor Made from Hanson!

2. Who are your favourite groups? Is it The Wiggles by any chance?

3. Have you ever bothered to meet your favourite groups? I have met the Spice Girls!

Mage J.T. Bishop

P.S. Emma "Baby Spice" Bunton Rules!

Woo hoo! Another perfectly sane, well adjusted PC PowerPlay reader with his senses of Taste, Style and Judgement turned up full. This should really be Letter Of The Month, but that'd mean giving Mage a free subscription, and encouraging folks like him runs against all the known laws of the universe. So, Mage, you've had Freakiness bestowed upon you.

Mage was good enough to send us the artwork you see here with his letter. While we couldn't and wouldn't want to fix the spelling on the pic, we couldn't hold back on the letter. The state you see it in isn't quite how it was when it arrived, suffice to say that we've never before been accused of being "hedrosexual" or "impidint"...

The charm of Mage's letter had its intended effect of course (what sort of evil, stone hearted bastards do you think we are??!!), so, the staff of PC PowerPlay would like to extend an apology to all Spice Girls fans - and indeed, the girls themselves. Gaming and the Spice Girls have always been inexorably linked. For example, when we're Quake Deathmatching we usually slip Spice World into the CD to build up the urge to run around killing everything that moves.

DETROIT

286 or better, 640k RAM, VGA, DOS 3.0, Adlib or Soundblaster

1993 Developer: Impressions

Detroit opened up a new universe of gaming for me. Before Detroit, 'strategy' meant military conquest, but shortly after discovering this truly brilliant game, strategy came to mean managing a highly complex game engine to achieve optimum, efficient results.

It's an accountant's game, more or less. Some have disparagingly called Detroit a spreadsheet disguised as a game, other detractors, at the time of its release, were put off by the rigidly linear nature of it all. Their loss. While at face value Detroit is indeed these things, as with all great strategy games, the light only shines after a deep exploration of the game mechanics.

The premise is simple. The game starts in 1908, near enough to the birth of the automobile as a commercially and industrially viable enterprise. You, the Player, have \$60,000 and a primitive passenger car with agricultural handling characteristics and appeal. For the next 100 years you're up against computer controlled rival companies, the ebbs and flows of the global and local economies and the demands of your workforce and their union.

Each turn-based turn passes a month of time (the manual proudly proclaims: "Detroit is entirely a turn-based game and has no real time component!"), before hitting that turn button though, you'll have to have everything just right - especially in the early stages. No other game I know of demands such anal perfection, which really is the beauty of Detroit. Each of your hundreds of employees must be allocated for maximum productivity - allocated to factories which also must be tuned for super efficiency. Periodically increasing benefits and wages is critical, for a strike - while perhaps only lasting a month, can have ramifica-



No 3D, no Generals & Majors - Detroit is really just a spreadsheet with graphics, but oh how good it is...

Office, the caper is, naturally, to spread your empire globally. This is where it starts to get complicated, for each territory has specific needs.

For example, eastern Europe loves trucks and vans, western Europe likes big luxu limos and most of the US appreciates a carefully selected and monitored variety of vehicles. All this changes as time passes, the Great Depression causes a massive global reduction in demand, but while it's on no worker is going to strike and you can drop

the wages way back - fantastic stuff!

Newspaper reports and the occasional industrial espionage infiltration will help steer your future plans.

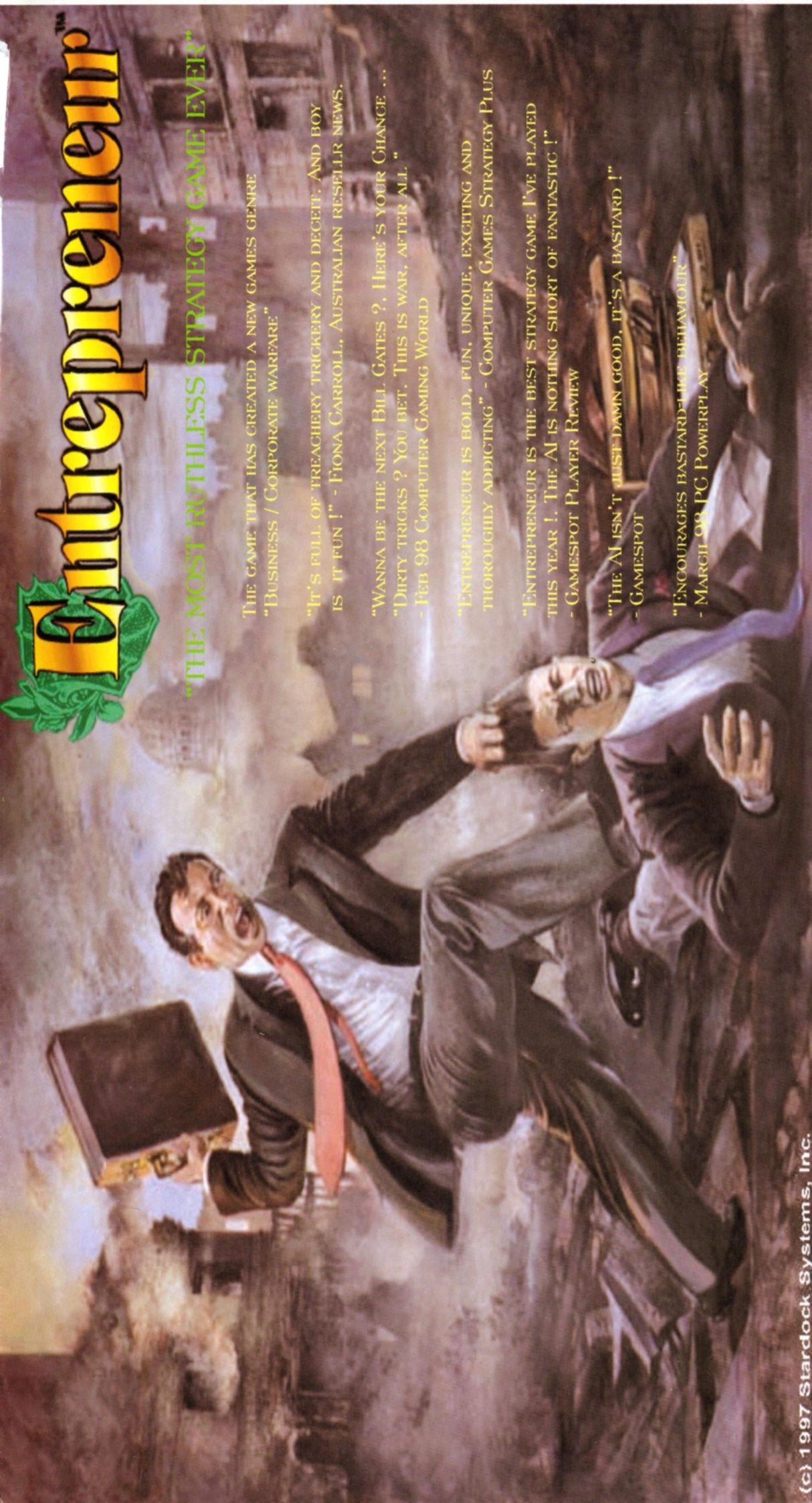
The heart of Detroit is the designing of new cars for the changing market. Depending on how many scientists you've got, and how much you're paying them, you'll be

granted new technologies every so often - ideally, more often than your competitors. Building sexy, powerful new sports cars, then running them through roadworthiness tests is great fun, but introduce a car like this at the wrong time and you'll lose a fortune.

I still play Detroit. Usually a game every few months when the seasonal drought of good games hits. The recent Entrepreneur is very similar, but has none of Detroit's charm. Detroit is magic strategy gaming that both captures the essence of the subject matter, as well as presenting the challenge of getting inside the minds of the game's programmers for any hope of success.

Ben Mansill





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Entrepreneur™

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"BUSINESS / CORPORATE WARFARE"

"IT'S FULL OF TREACHERY TRICKERY AND DECEIT. AND BOY
IS IT FUN!" - FIONA CARROLL, AUSTRALIAN RESELLER NEWS.

"WANNA BE THE NEXT BILL GATES? HERE'S YOUR CHANCE ...
"DIRTY TRICKS? YOU BET. THIS IS WAR, AFTER ALL."
- FEB 98 COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

"ENTREPRENEUR IS BOLD, FUN, UNIQUE, EXCITING AND
THOROUGHLY ADDICTING" - COMPUTER GAMES STRATEGY PLUS

"ENTREPRENEUR IS THE BEST STRATEGY GAME I'VE PLAYED
THIS YEAR !. THE AI IS NOTHING SHORT OF FANTASTIC !"
- GAMESPOT PLAYER REVIEW

"THE AI ISN'T JUST DAMN GOOD, IT'S A BASTARD !"
- GAMESPOT

"ENCOURAGES BASTARD-LIKE BEHAVIOUR"
- MARCH 98 PC POWERPLAY

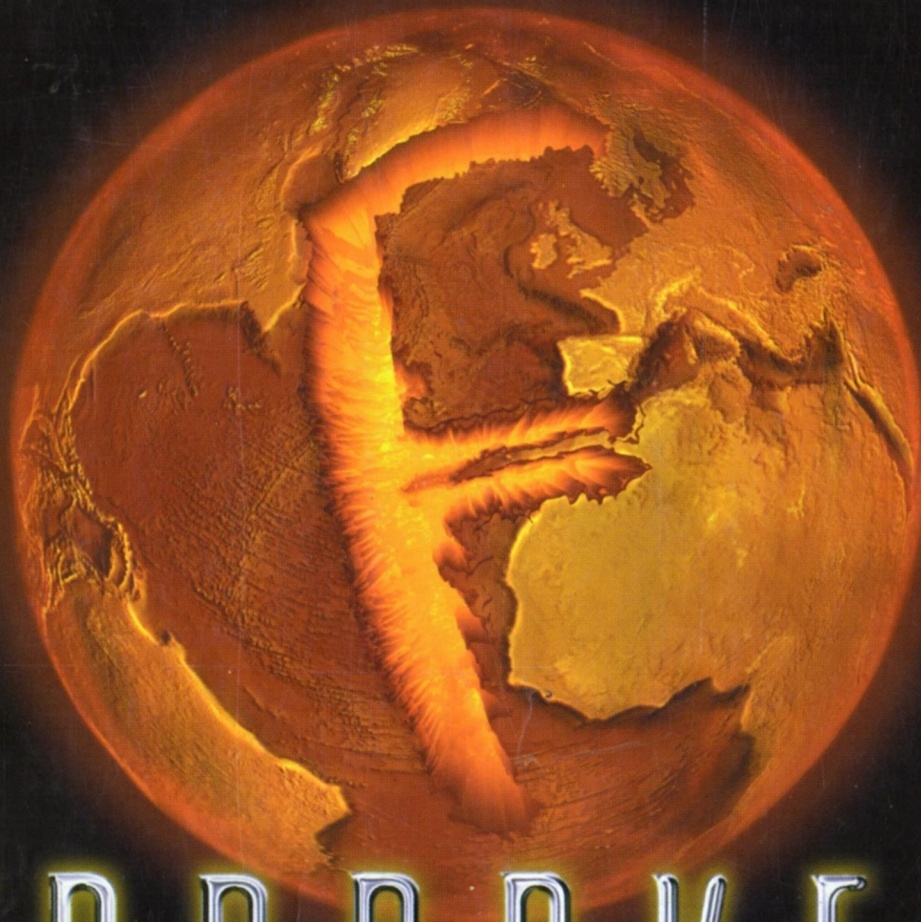
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Windows 95


PlayStation.

NINTENDO⁶⁴



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